

KOGARATSU

THE BACK OF
THE TIGER



REPERAGES
DUPUIS

+ ~~Frugality~~ ~~Frugality~~ ~~Frugality~~

1

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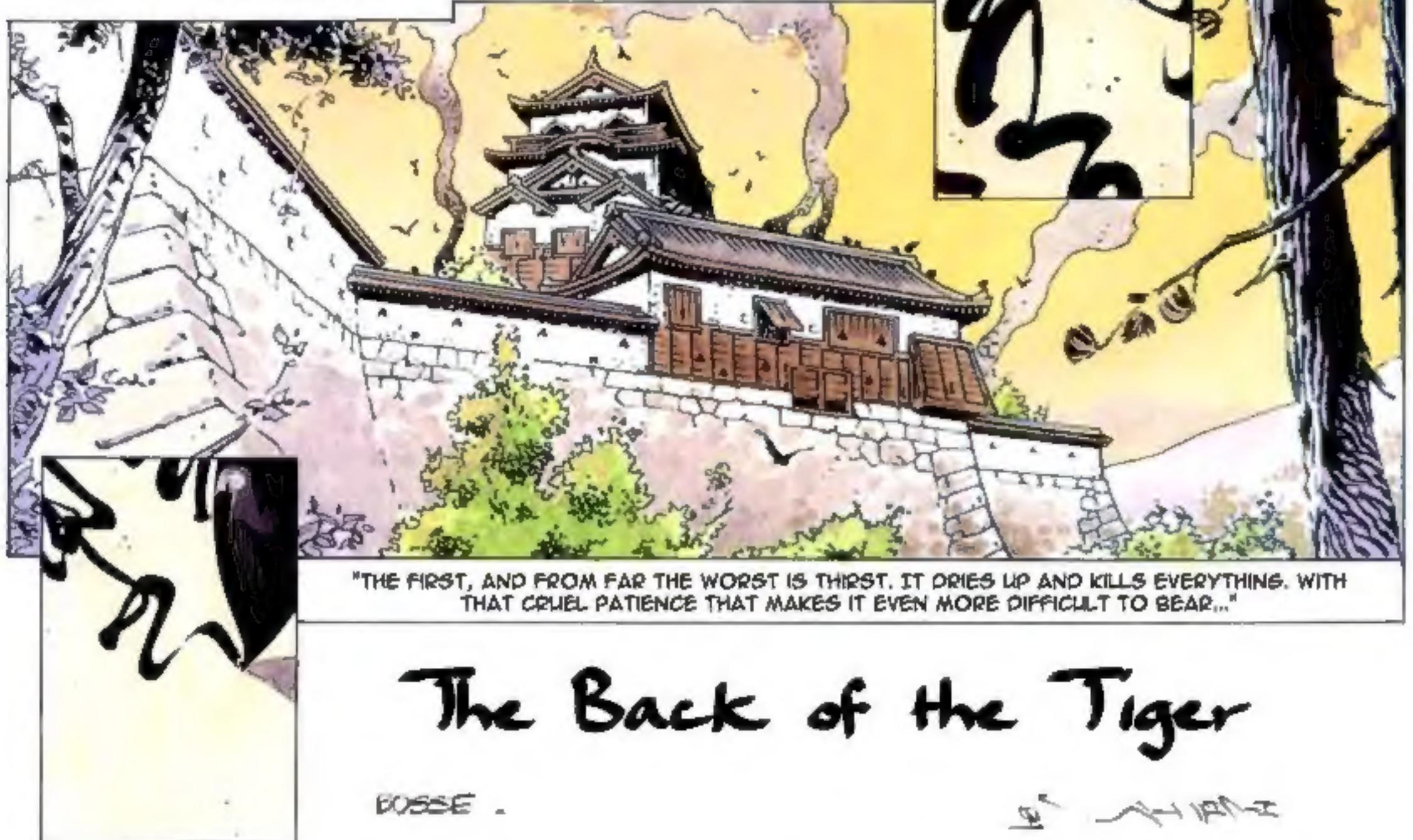
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KODAKS.

THE BACK OF
THE TRAIL.



"CASTLE OF ISHIKARI, AUGUST 1611, THE SUN, STILL AND DEVASTATING, IS IN THE REBEL CAMP, BRINSING A PROCESSION OF CALAMITIES..."



"THE FIRST, AND FROM FAR THE WORST IS THIRST. IT DRIES UP AND KILLS EVERYTHING. WITH THAT CRUEL PATIENCE THAT MAKES IT EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO BEAR..."

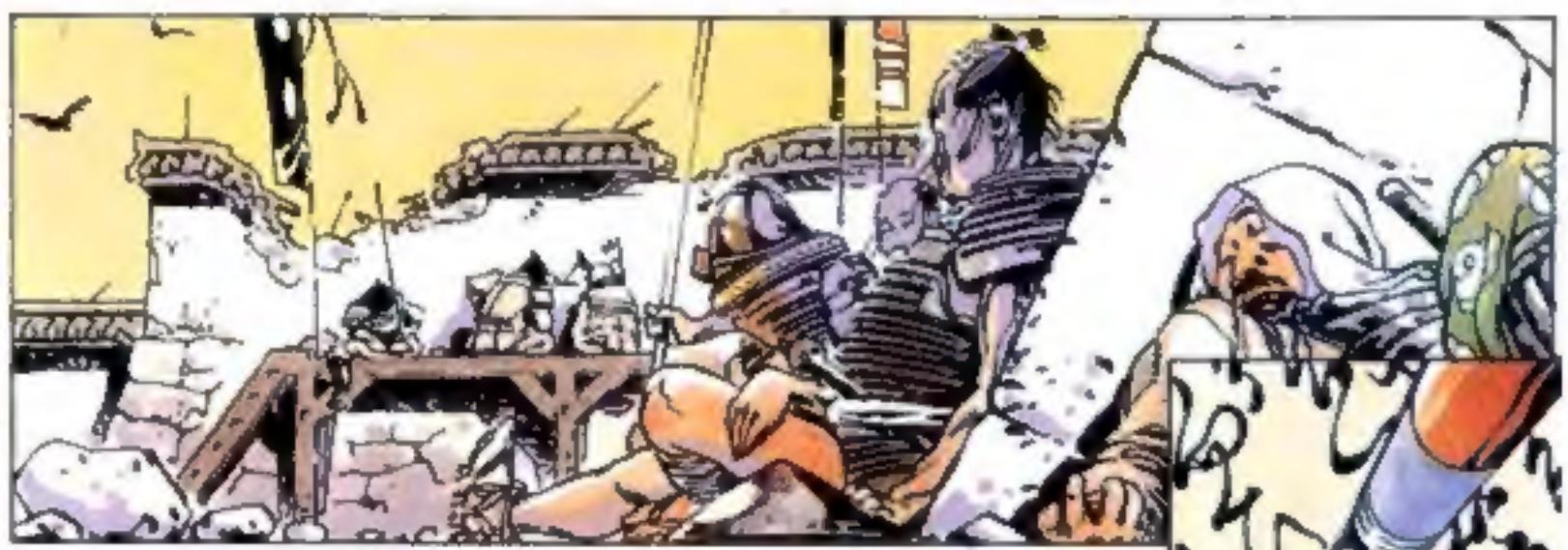
The Back of the Tiger

BOSSE .

WILHELM

"BROTHER MOSQUITO, IS ALSO HERE. IT MADE ITSELF MYRIAD TO JOIN THIS MORBID CELEBRATION. IT BITES AND IRRITATES... LEAVING BEHIND SWOLLEN LIMBS AND DYSENTERIC FEVERS, THAT EMPTY OUR PEOPLE FROM THE LAST DROPS OF WATER LEFT IN THEM..."

"...NOT TO MENTION THE DISEASES, SLOW OR LIGHTNING, THEY CORRUPT AND PUTREFY FLESH. THEY SWEEP FROM ONE BODY TO THE OTHER, IN THE END EVERYONE OF US FEARS THE PROXIMITY OF OTHERS. THIS IS THE LOT OF THE DEFENDERS OF THIS CASTLE, BESIEGED FOR NEARLY TWO MONTHS NOW..."



"...BUT OUR SITUATION BECAME EVEN MORE DESPERATE WHEN THE REBELS DISCOVERED AND DESTROYED THE CANALISATIONS THAT SUPPLIED THE CASTLE WITH DRINKING WATER..."



"I WON'T MENTION THE SMELLS, WHICH BECAME UNBEARABLE, SINCE THE TANKS BECAME EMPTY, EVEN NOBLE PEOPLE CANNOT WASH, AND THE PERFUME IS STARTING TO LACK..."



"...BY CHANCE, THE RESERVES OF THE CASTLE CONTAINED MANY BARRELS OF SAKE AND WE, LADIES, ARE NOT DYING FROM THIRST, EVEN IF WE SUFFER FROM HEARTBURNS....."



"AS FOR THE GARRISON, IT IS MELTING AWAY. SOON, WE WILL HAVE TO USE FURNITURE AND PANELLING TO BURN THE CORPSES. A GREASY SMOKE IS ALWAYS RISING FROM THE GARDENS..."



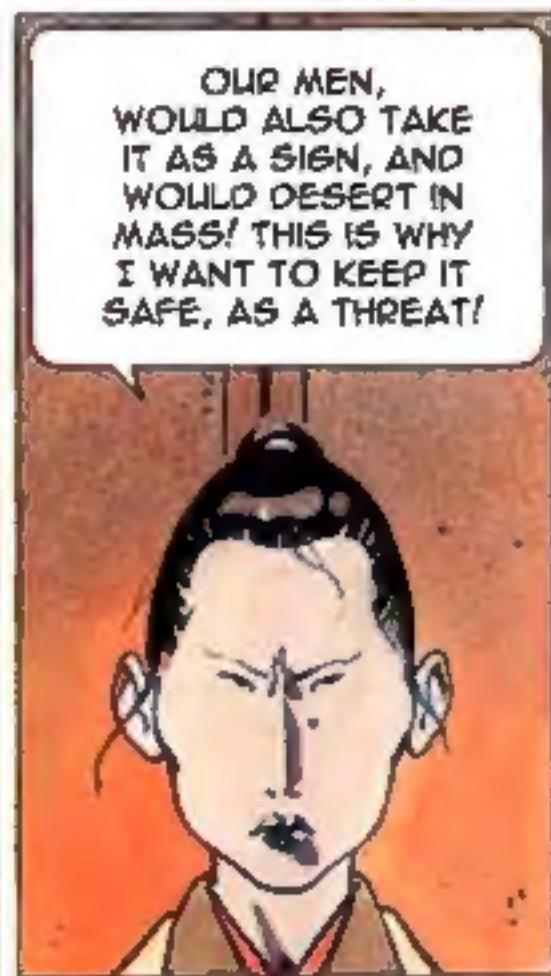
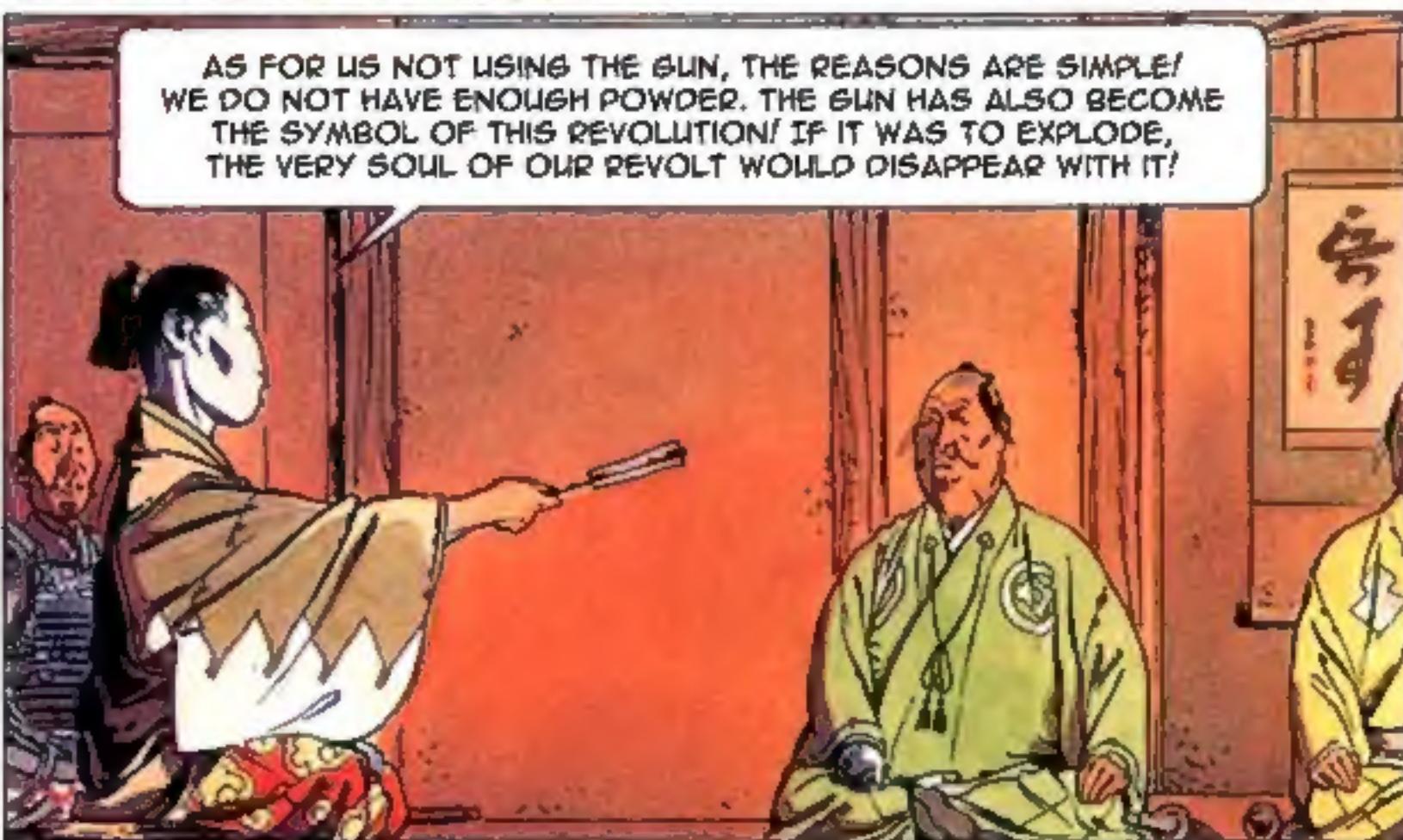
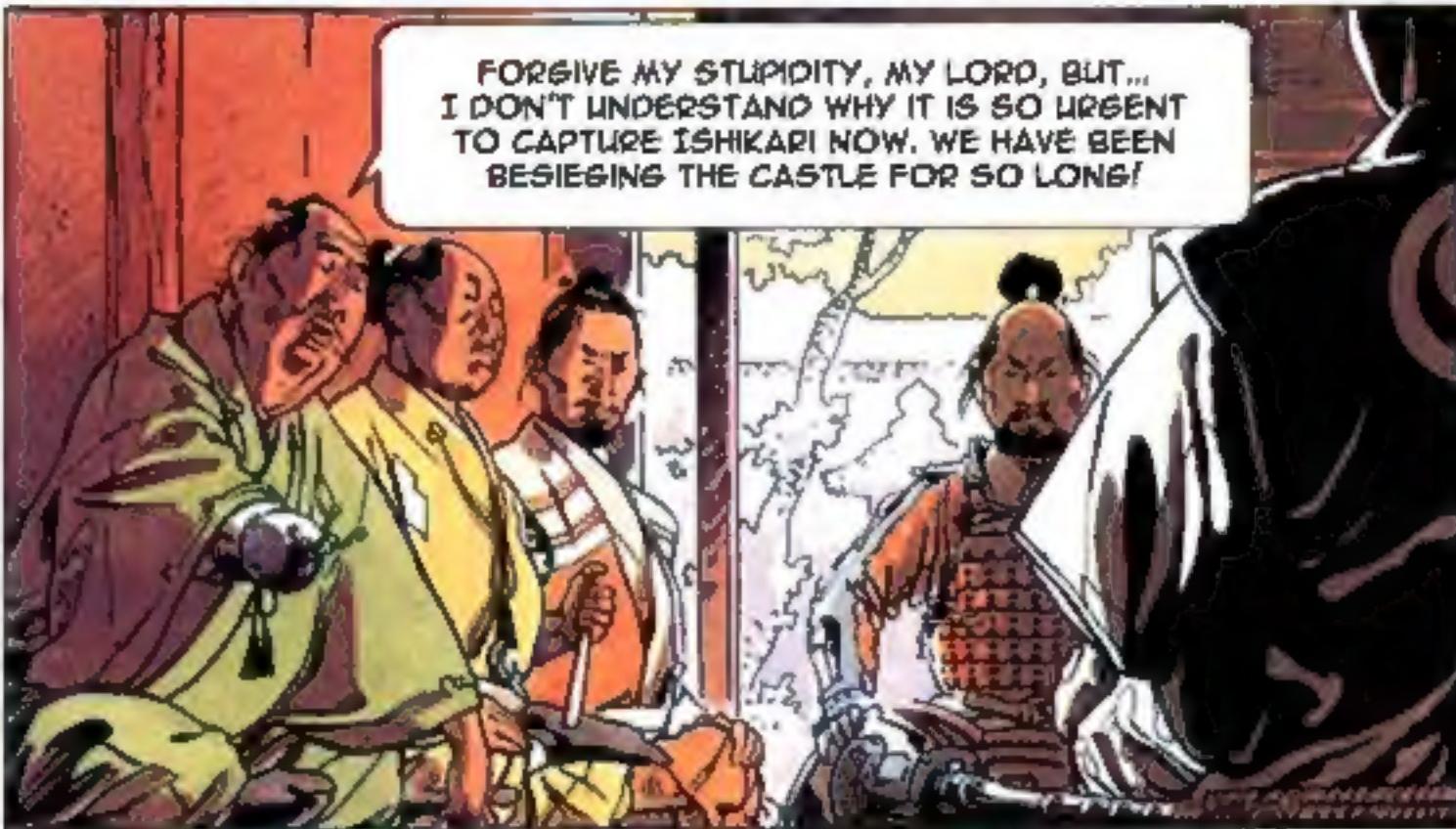
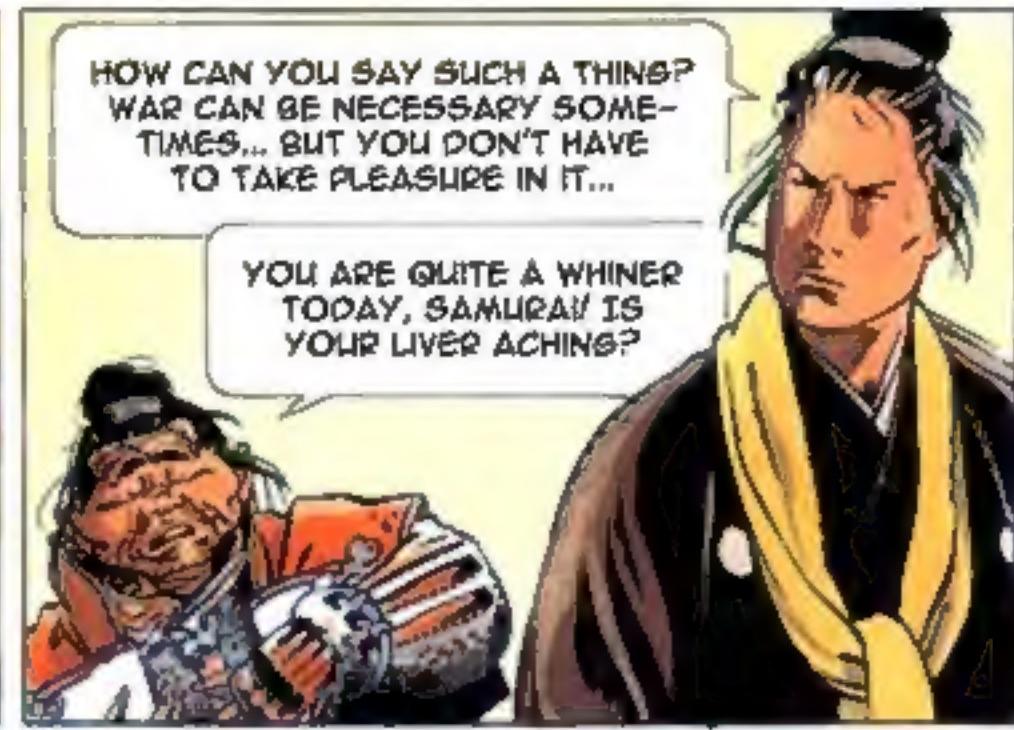
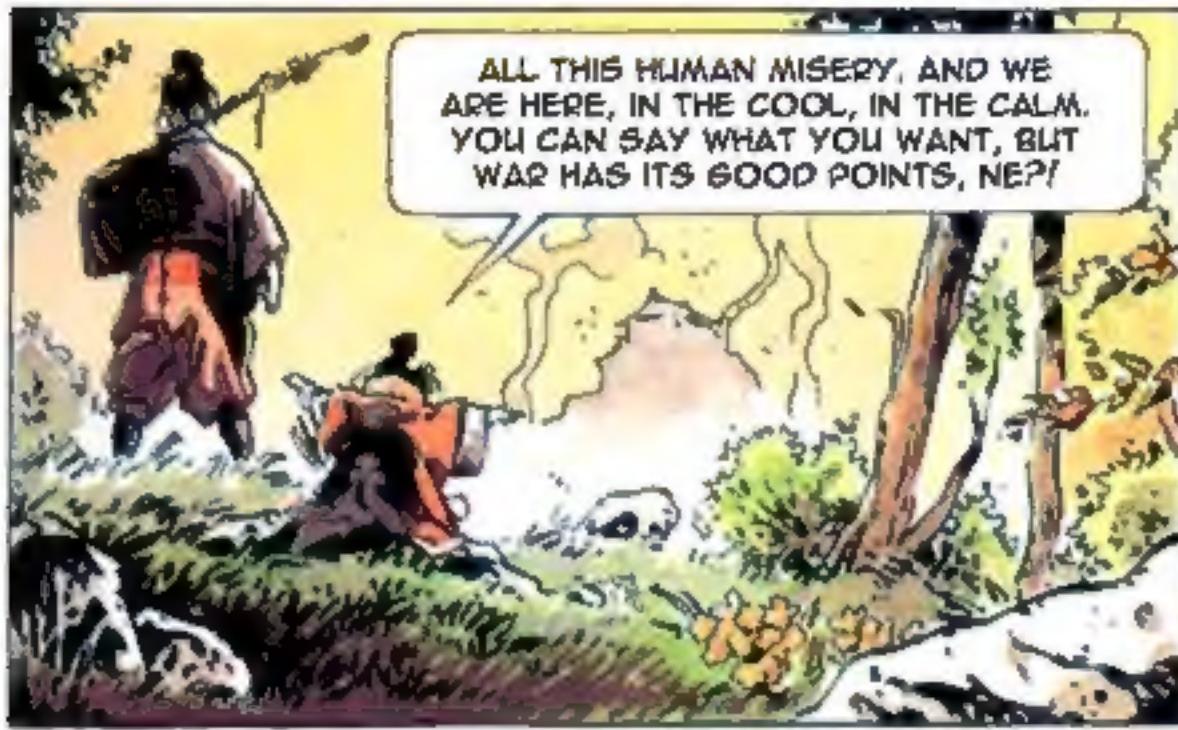
"...I WONDER WHY THE CASTLE HASN'T FALLEN INTO THE HANDS OF SIRE BANDO AND HIS PEASANTS..."

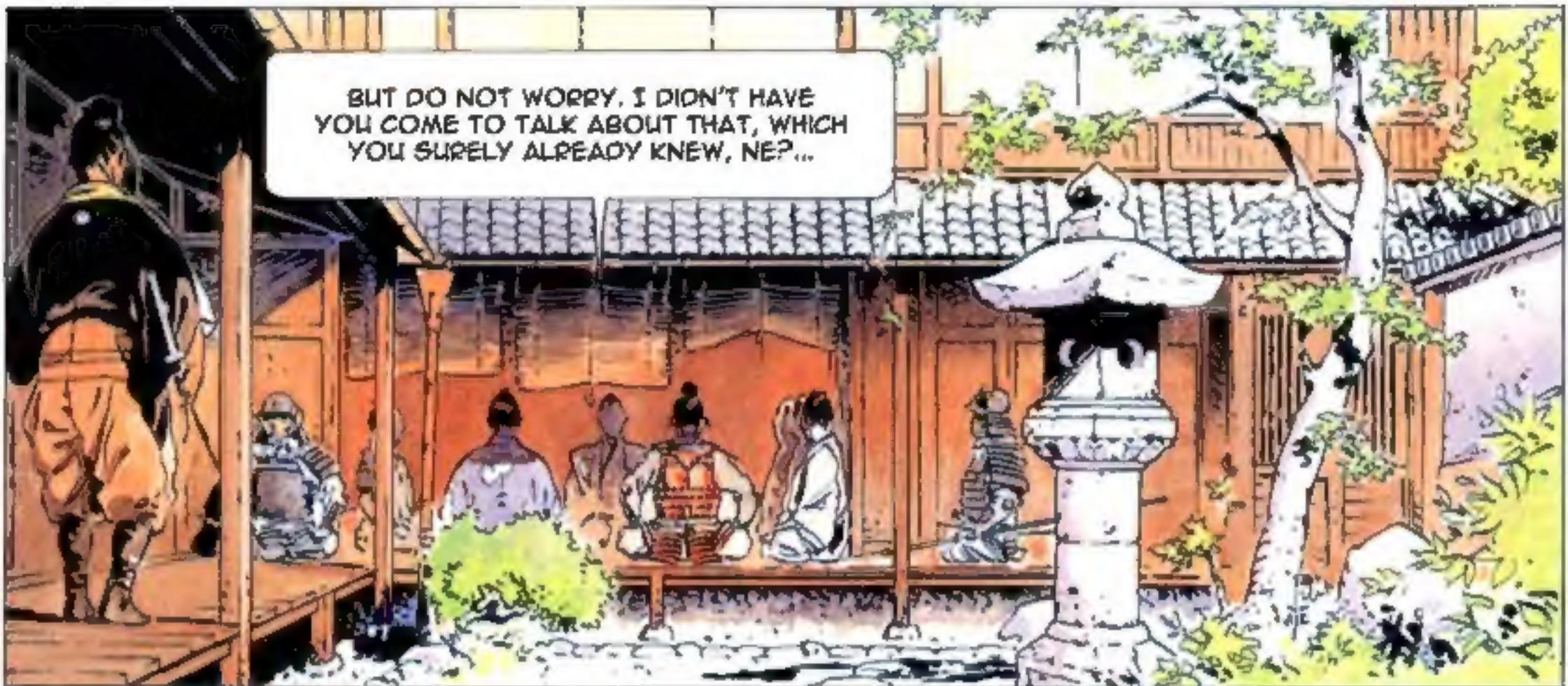


"...ACTUALLY, THEY MAY BE WAITING FOR US TO BECOME CRAZY, JUST LIKE SIRE MITSURI. OR MAYBE THEY BECAME CRAZY, AFTER STAYING SO LONG IN THE SUN..."



"...AND YOU ARE AMONG THOSE MAD MEN, KOGARATSU! AT THE SAME TIME SO CLOSE AND SO FAR FROM ME..."





IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, KOSARATSU-SAN, YOUR MASTER TOLD YOU THIS STORY BEFORE HE DIED, DID HE NOT?

...THAT IS TRUE. ALAS... HE DIDN'T HAVE THE TIME TO TELL ME WHERE THE EXIT OF THIS CORRIDOR WAS...

IT MAKES HIS DISAPPEARANCE EVEN MORE PAINFUL.

KOSARATSU-SAN, YOU WILL TAKE THE LEAD OF A HEIMIN SQUAD. SEARCH THE WHOLE AREA. I WANT THIS CORRIDOR TO BE DISCOVERED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE! MY PLAN REQUIRES IT!

THE SECRET ROOM THE PASSAGE STARTS FROM, IS IN THE FORMER ROOM OF MY FATHER, THAT PIG OF MITSURU NOW LIVES IN IT!

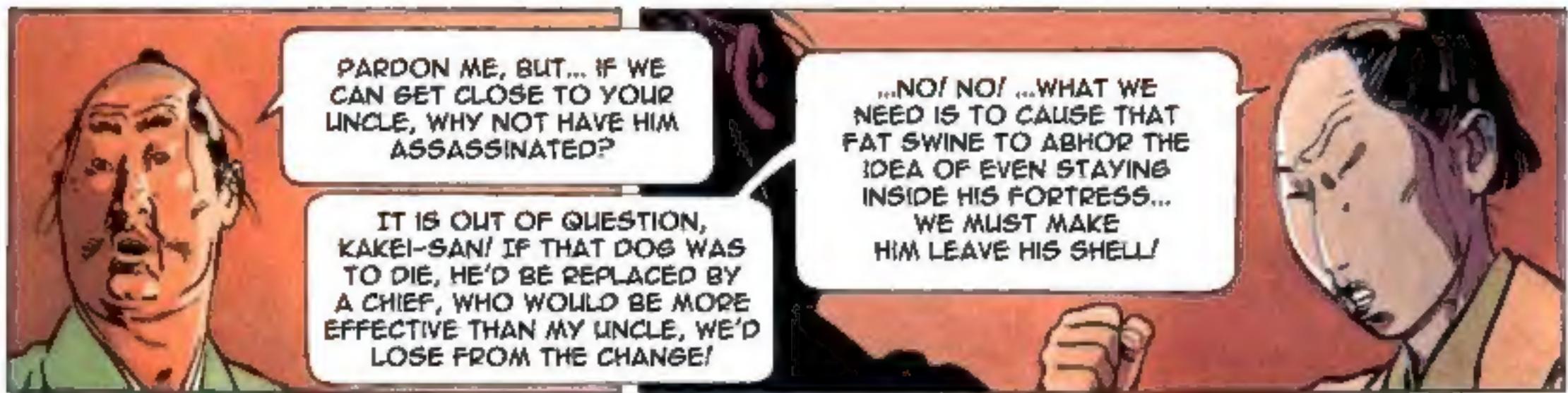
...YOU KNOW MY DESPOTIC UNCLE'S SANITY IS QUITE WEAK. IF SOMEONE WAS TO SNEAK INTO THE CASTLE AND ACT AS MY BROTHER'S GHOST, HE'D BECOME COMPLETELY MAD!

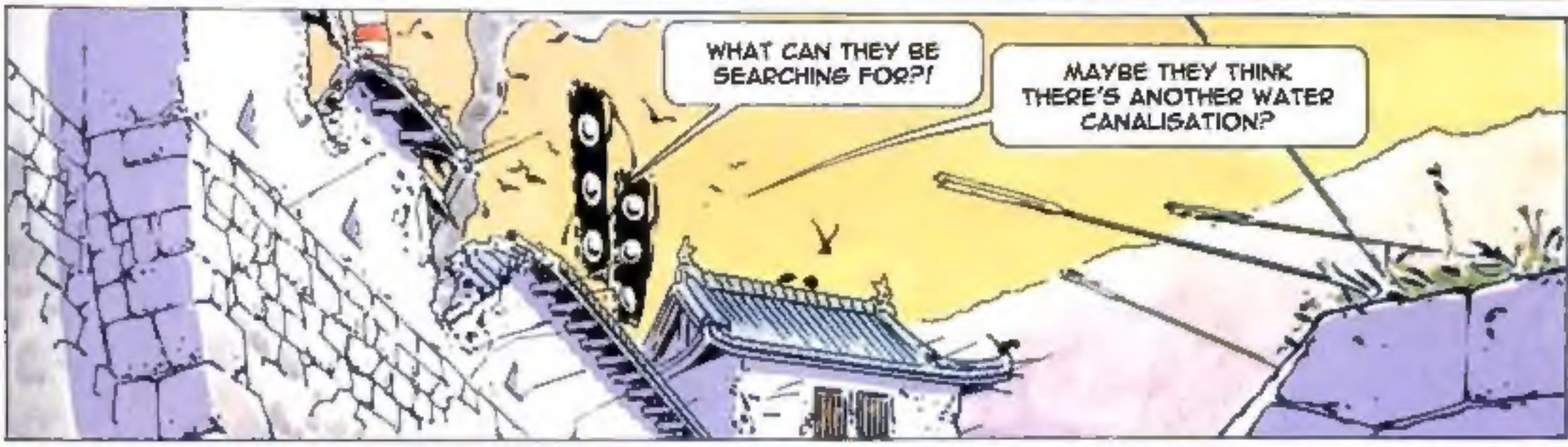
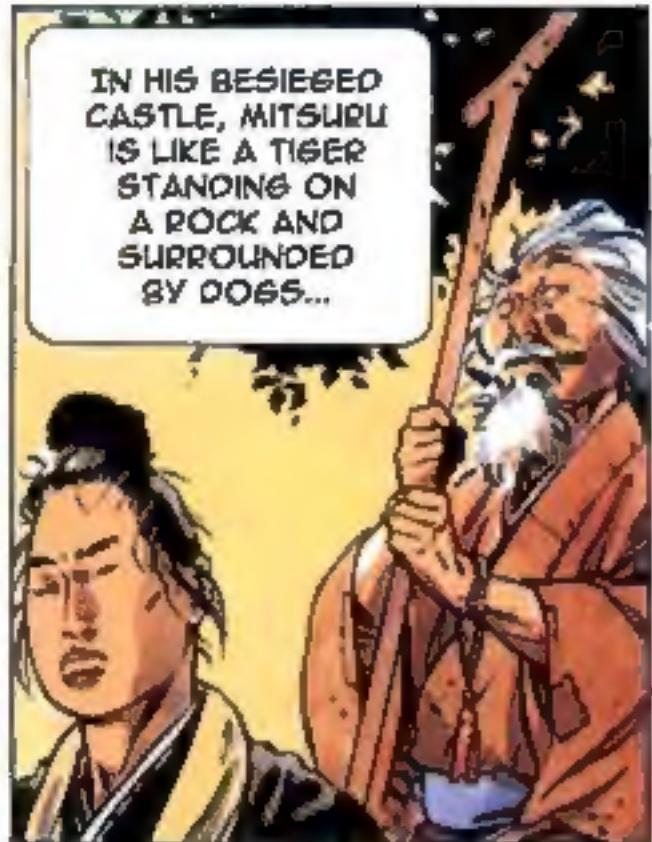
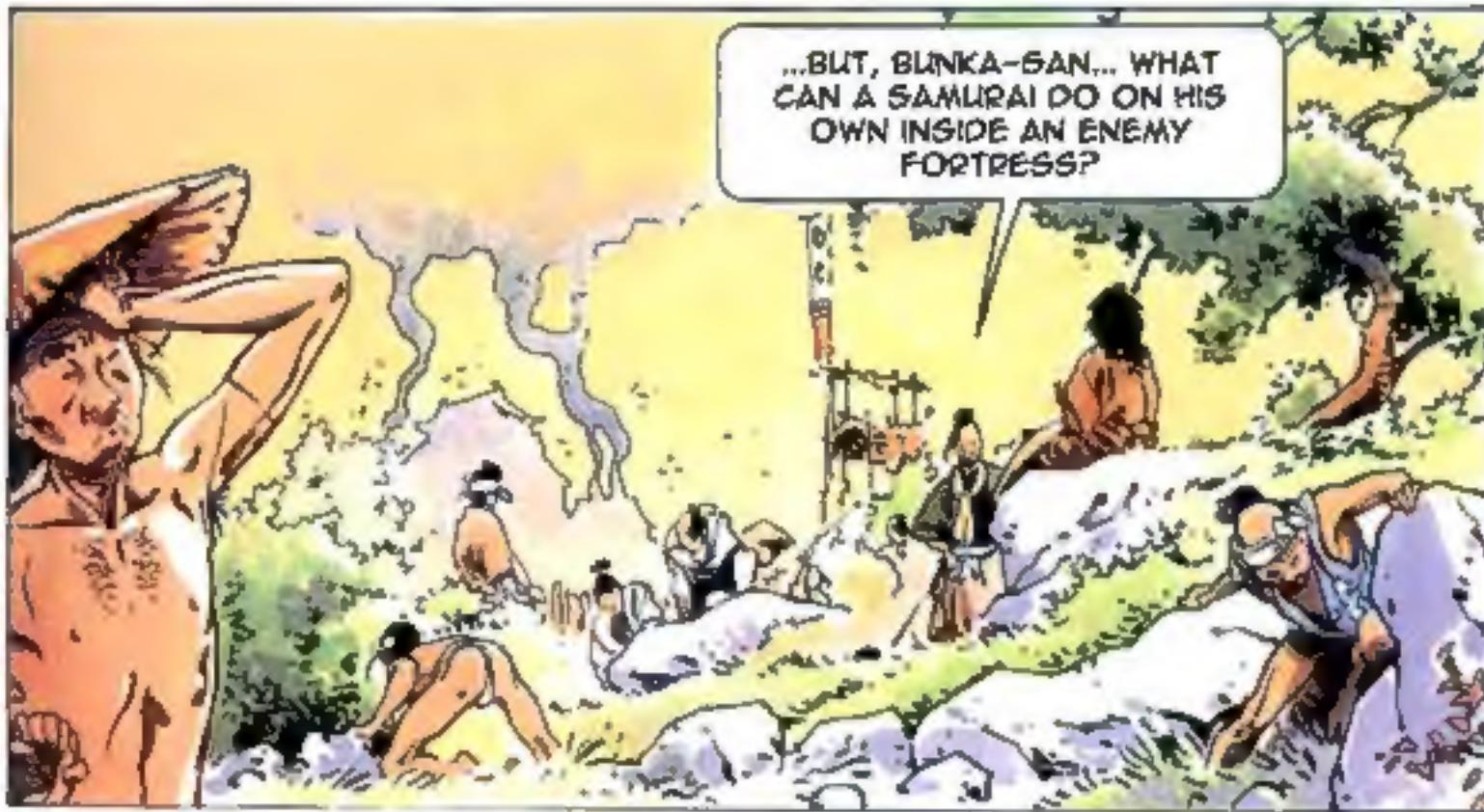
HA! HA! HA! HA!

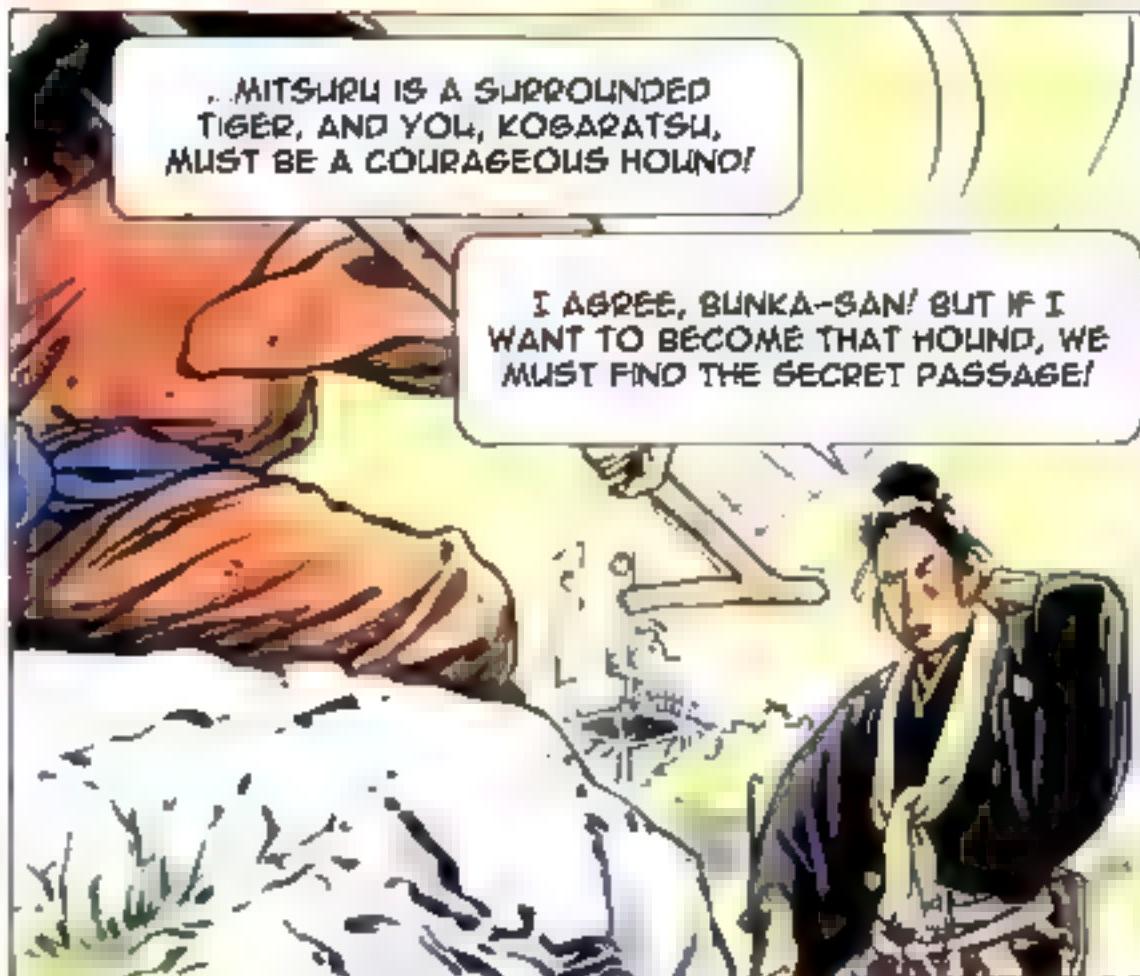
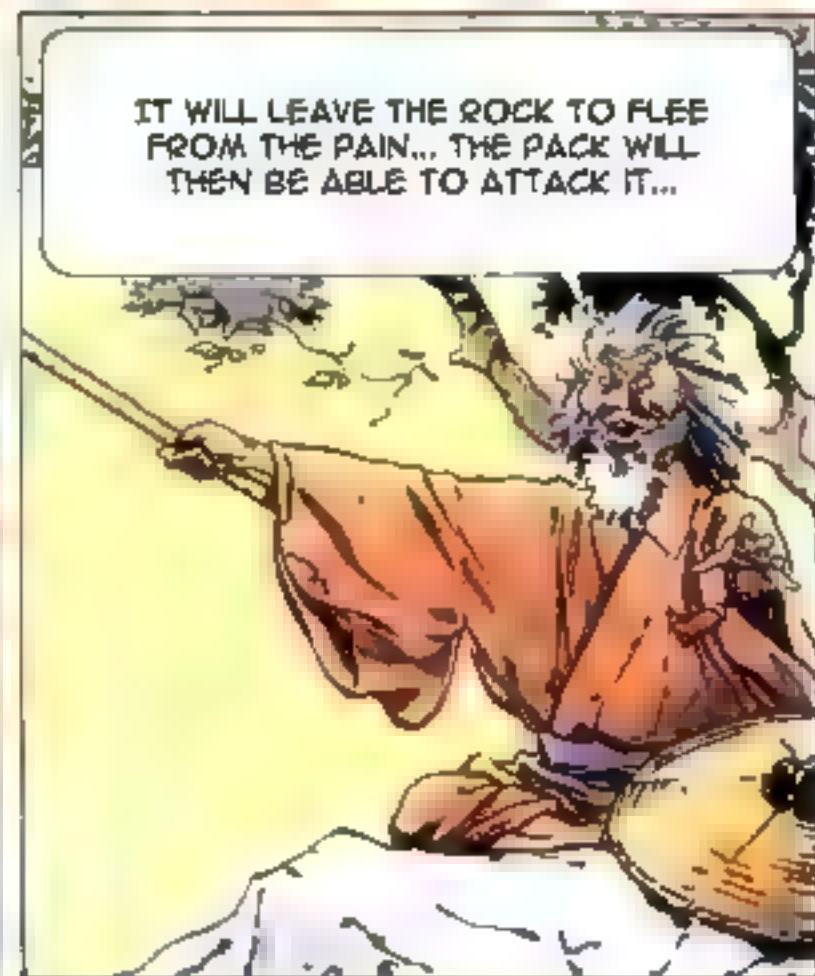
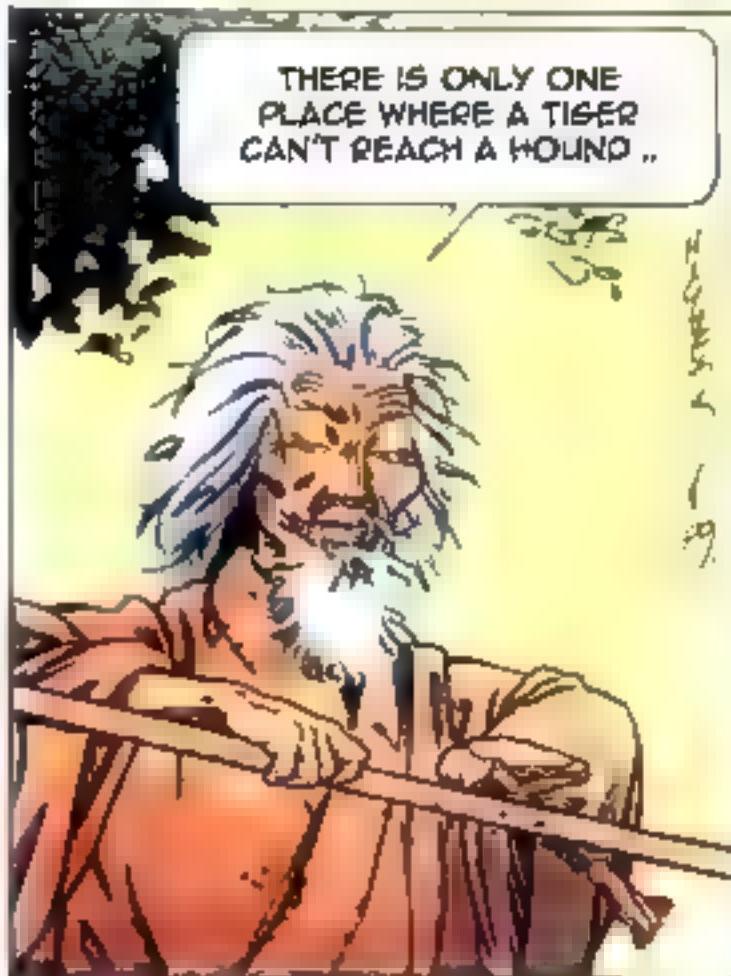
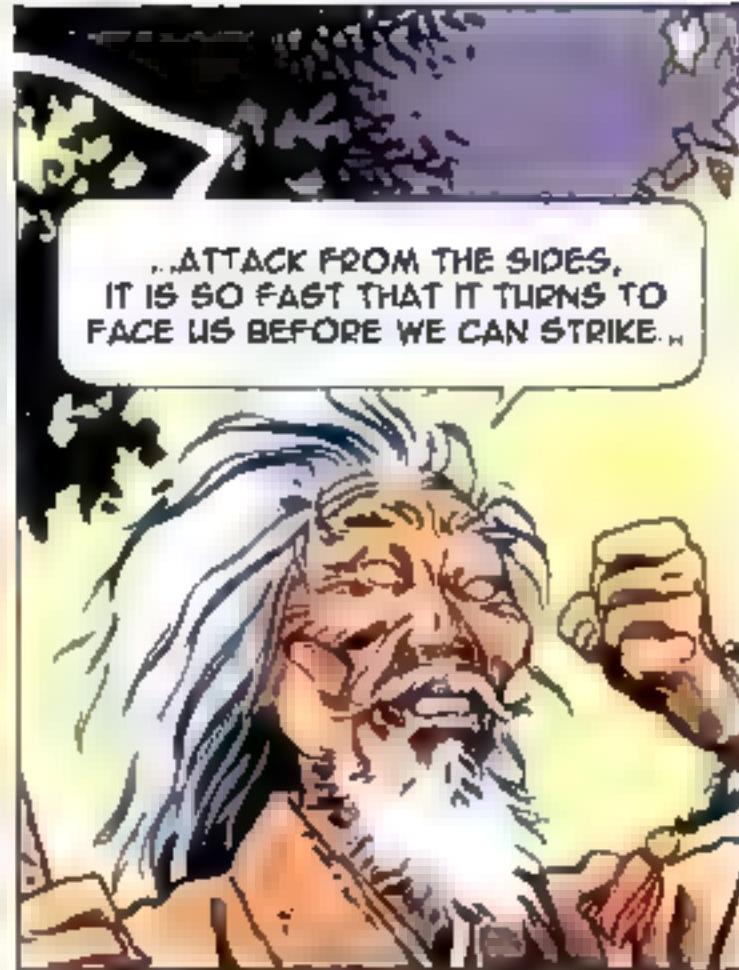
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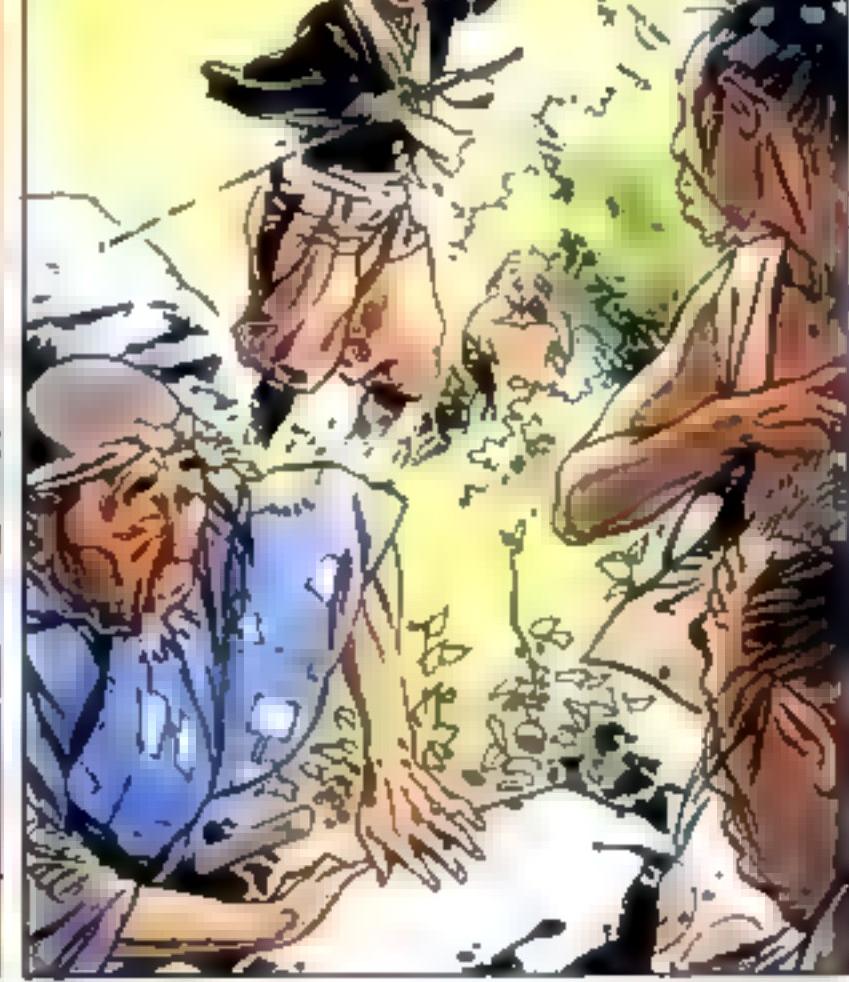
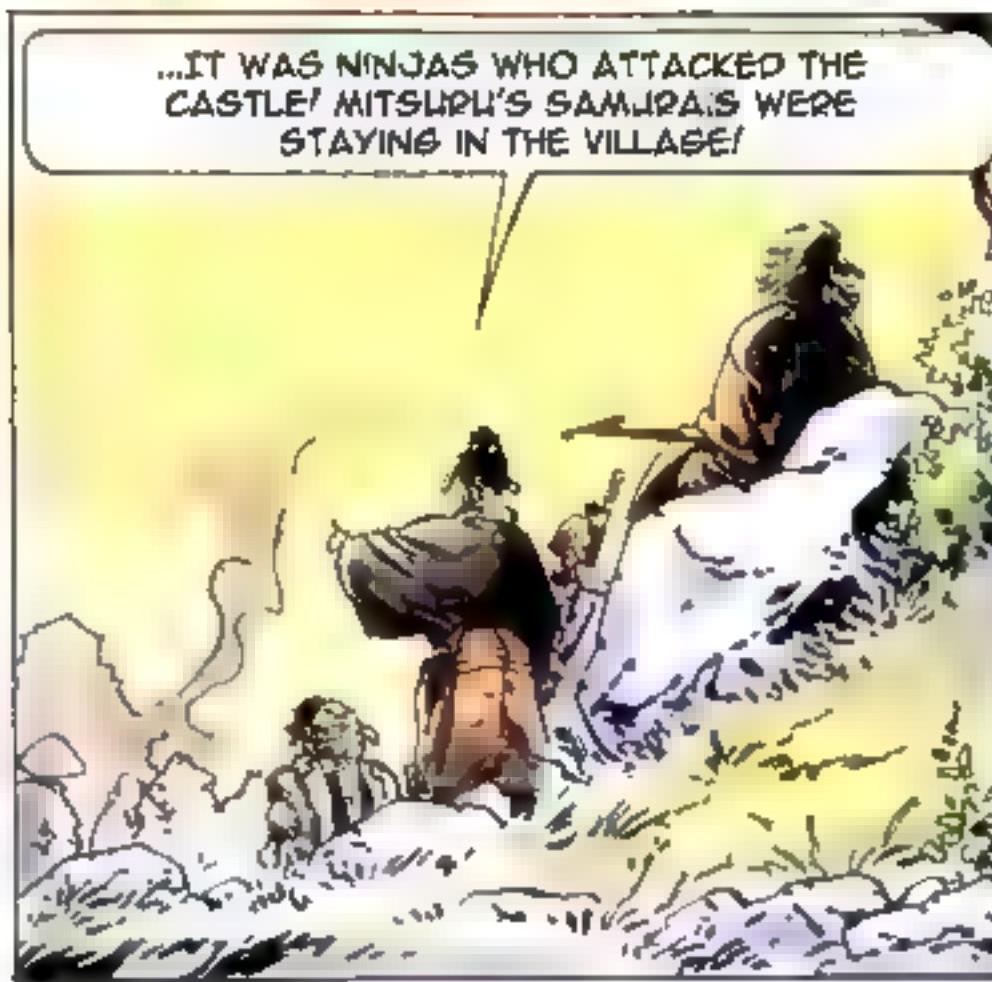
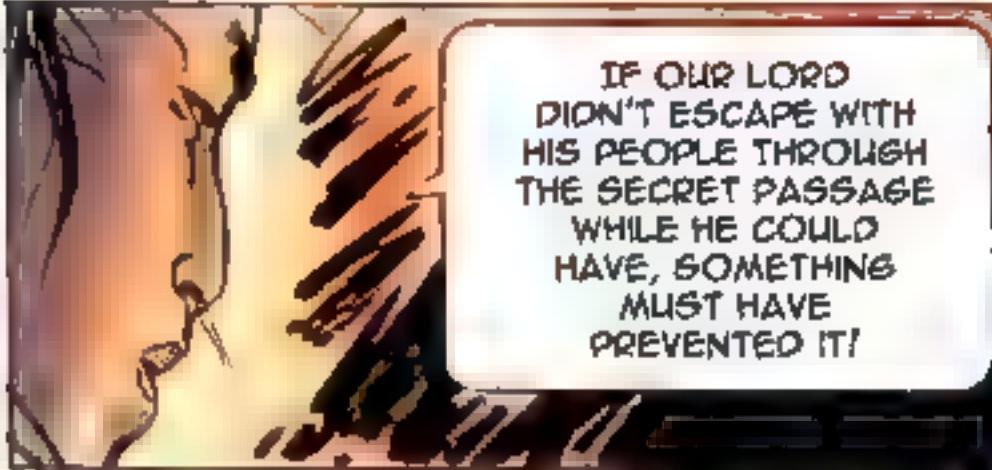
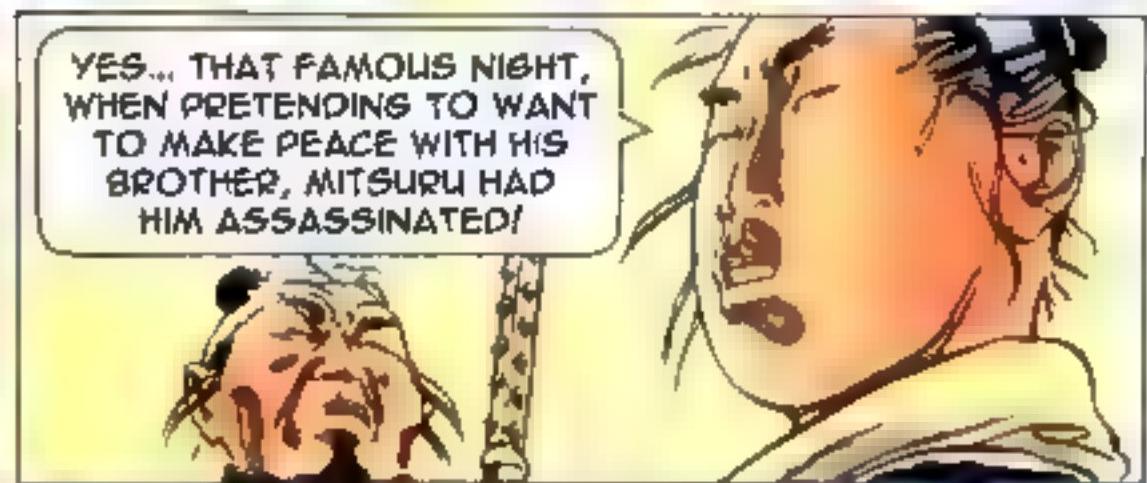
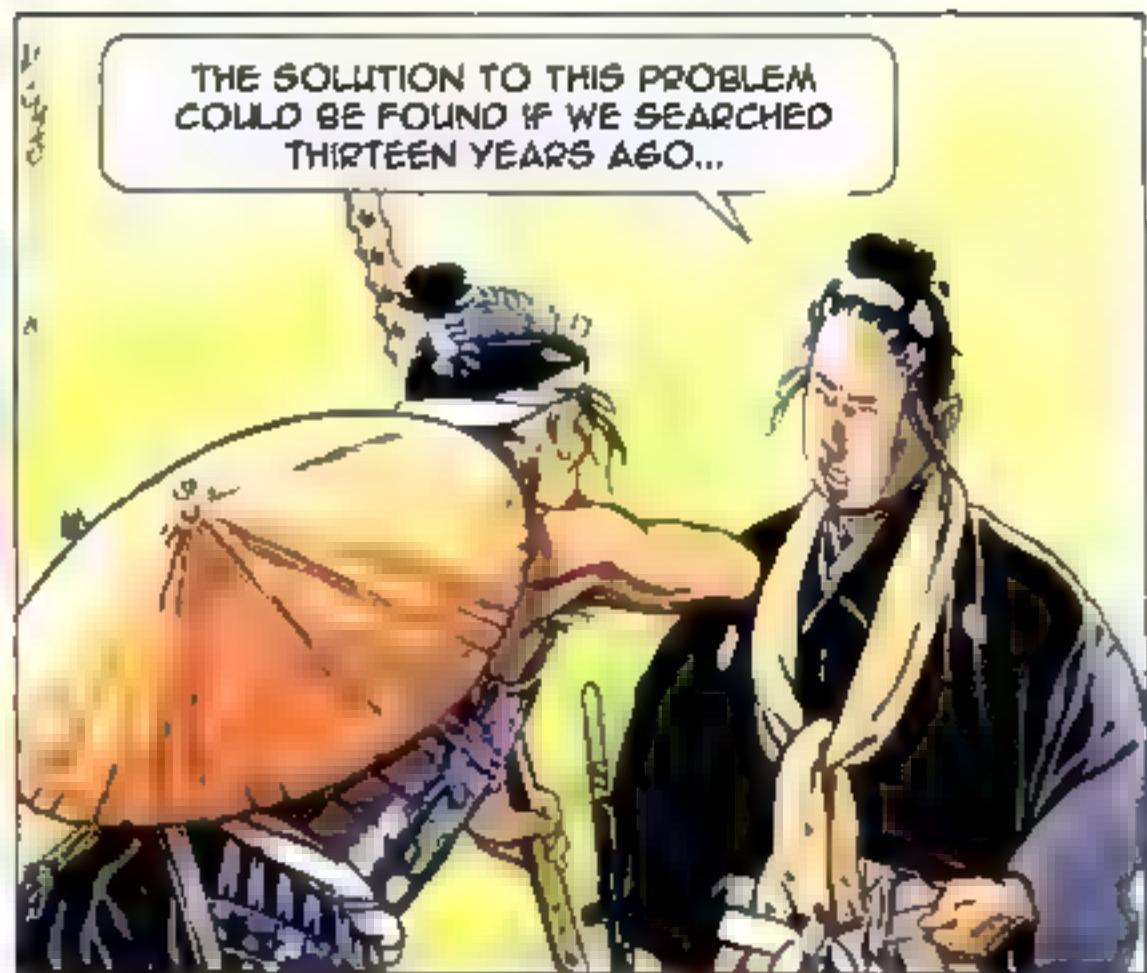
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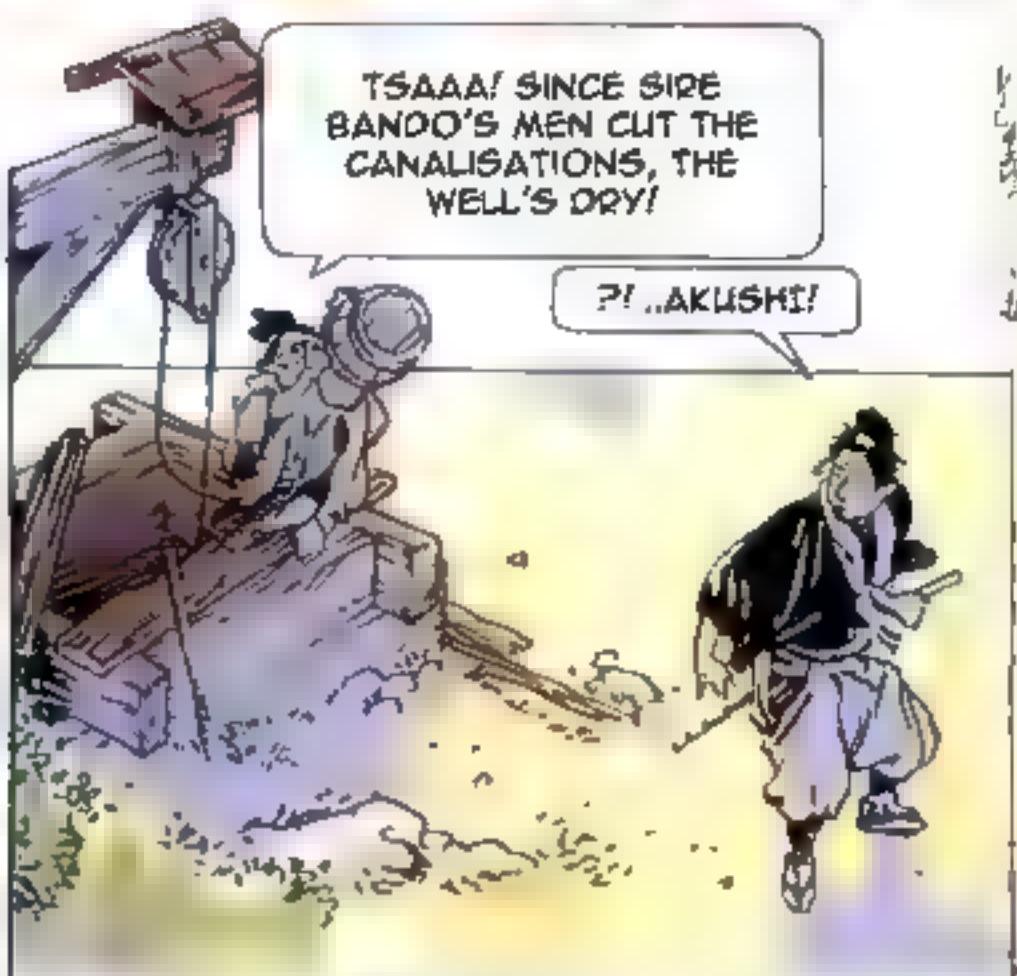
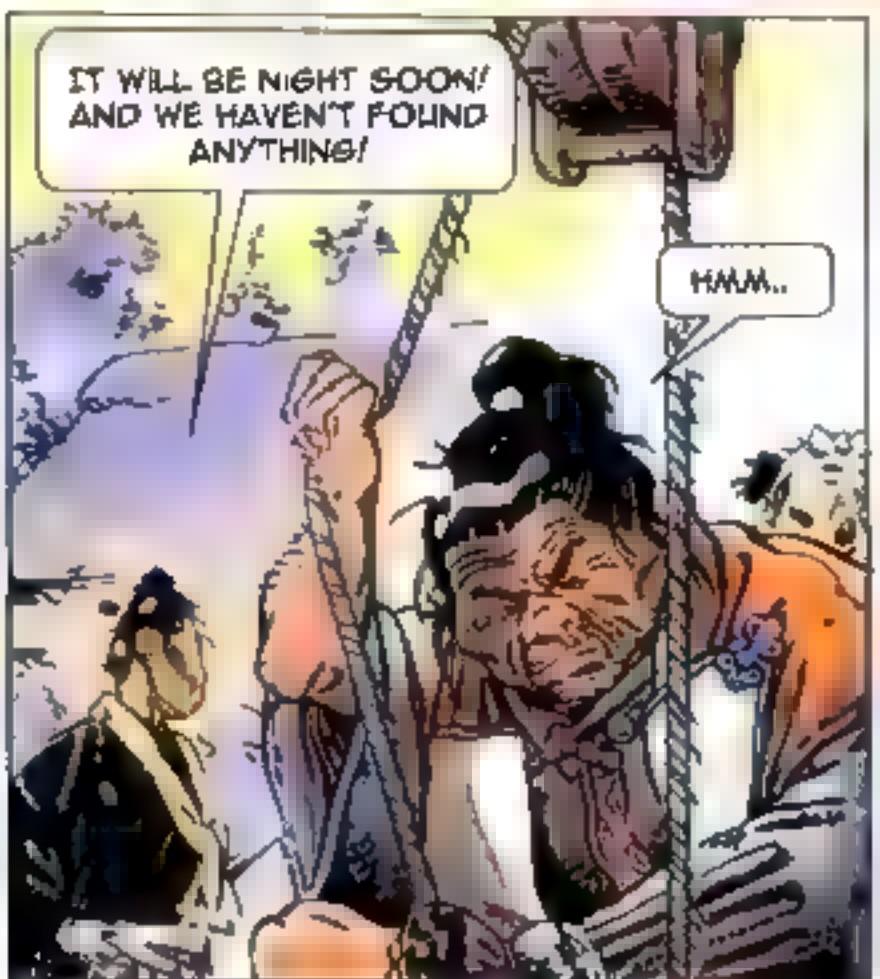
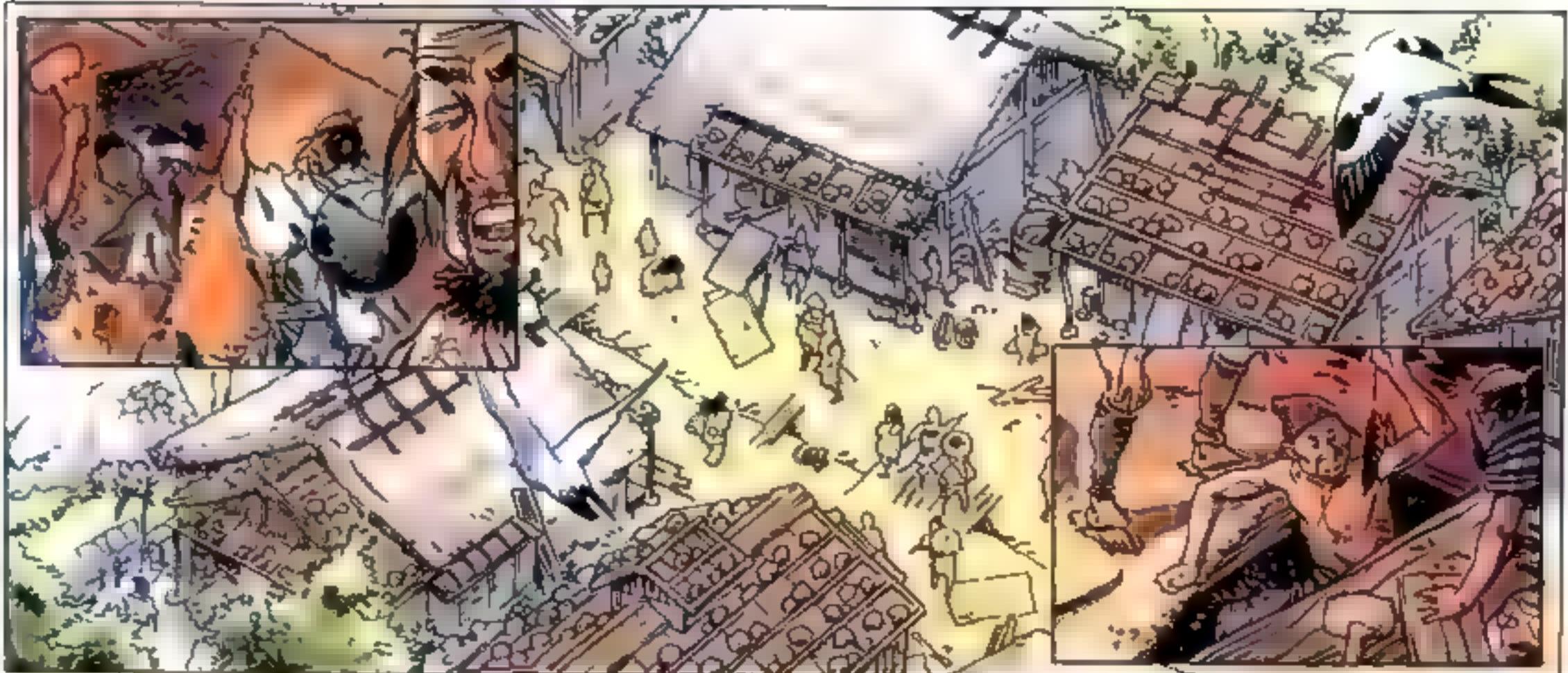
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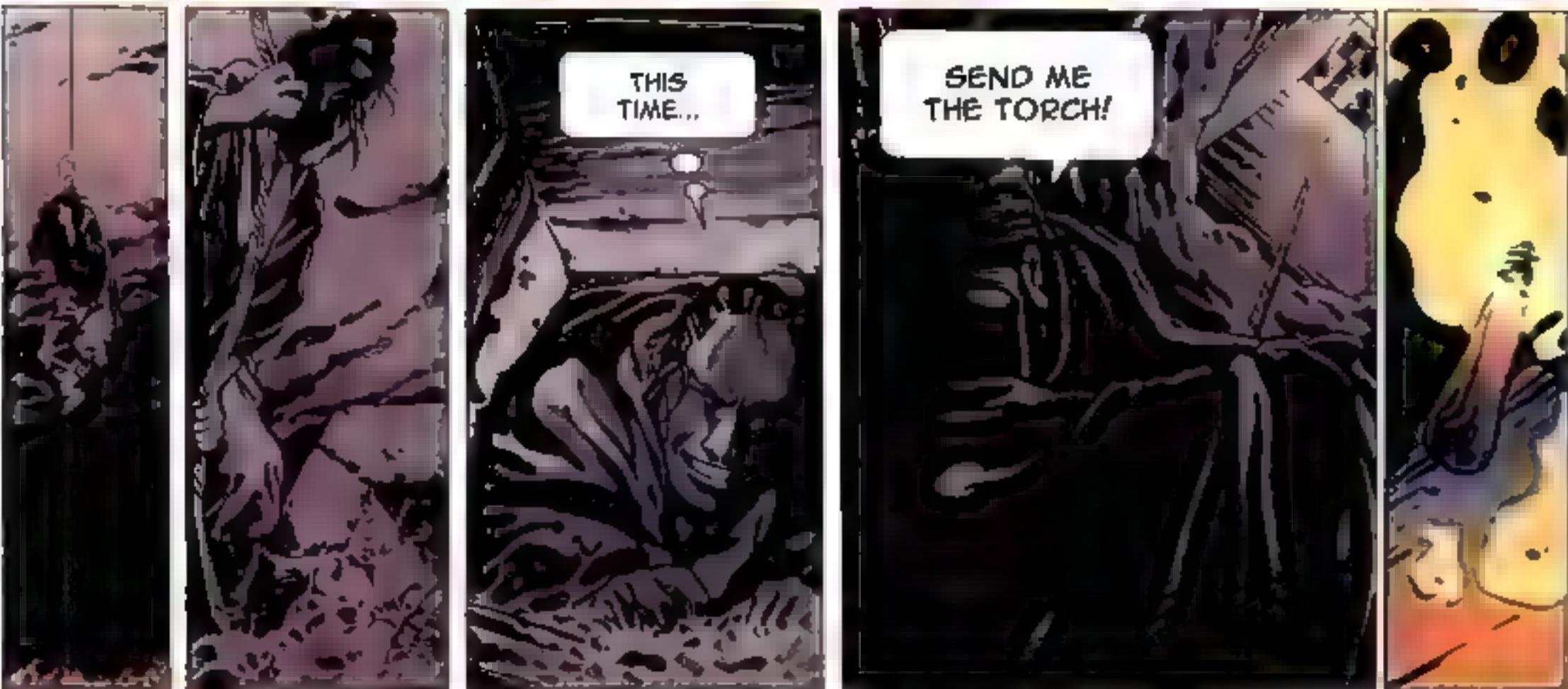












"WHEN THE NIGHT FINALLY COMES, AS THE SUN SLOWLY FALLS BEHIND THE HORIZON, AS THE HEAT STARTS TO FADE AND MEN WELCOME THE SHADE WITH GRATITUDE..."



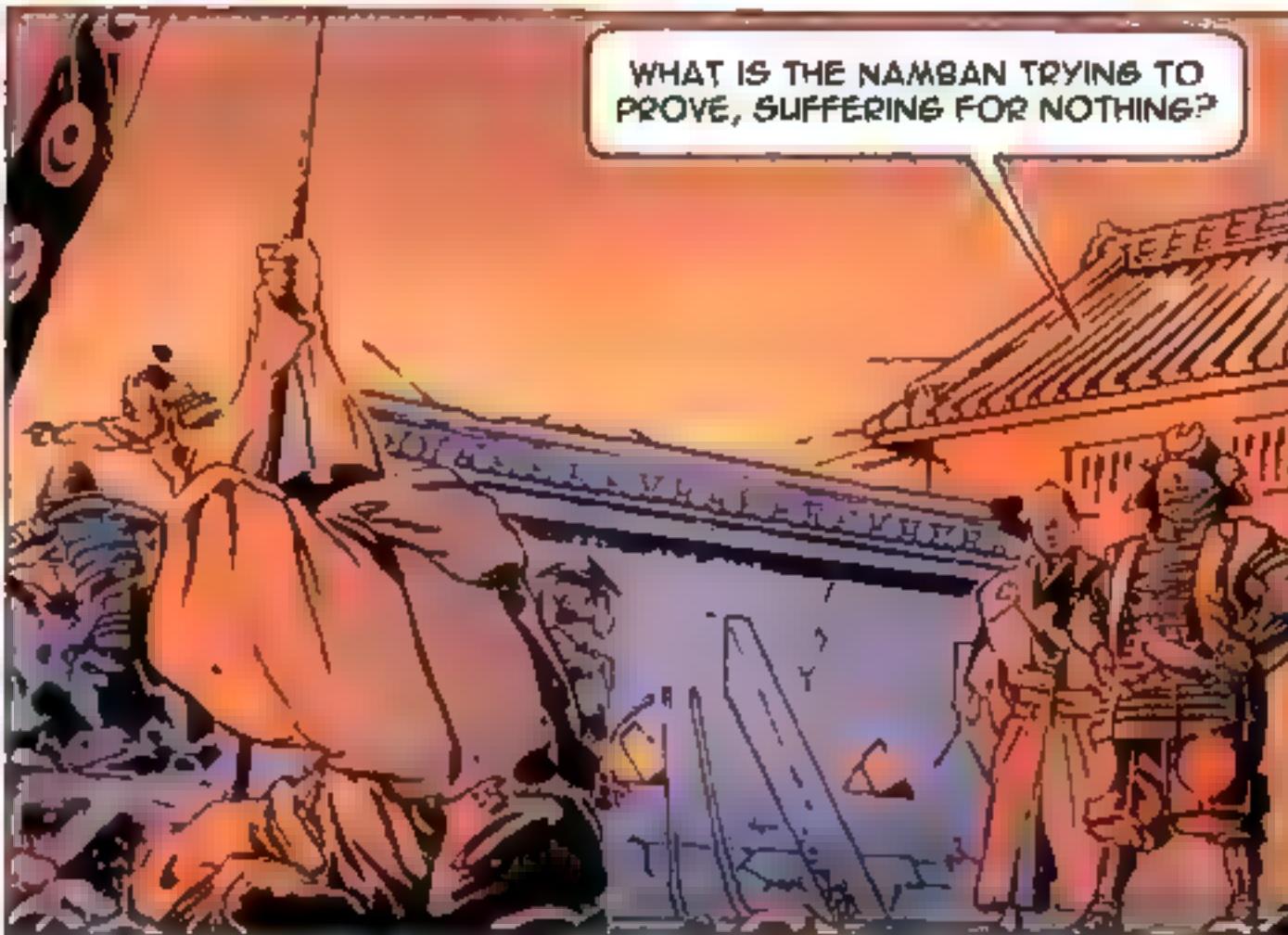
"...AT LAST, THEY ARE NOT FORCED ANY LONGER TO MASS ALONG THE WALLS TO ESCAPE THE TERRIBLE BITE OF THE SUN WHICH FINISHES WHAT THE LACK OF WATER STARTED..."



"PADRE ORTEGA SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY PERSON LOOKING FOR THE SUN AND WHILE HE MORTIFIES HIMSELF HE KEEPS ON REPEATING THE SAME PRAYERS. THE KIRISHITO TOO HAS PROBABLY BECOME CRAZY..."



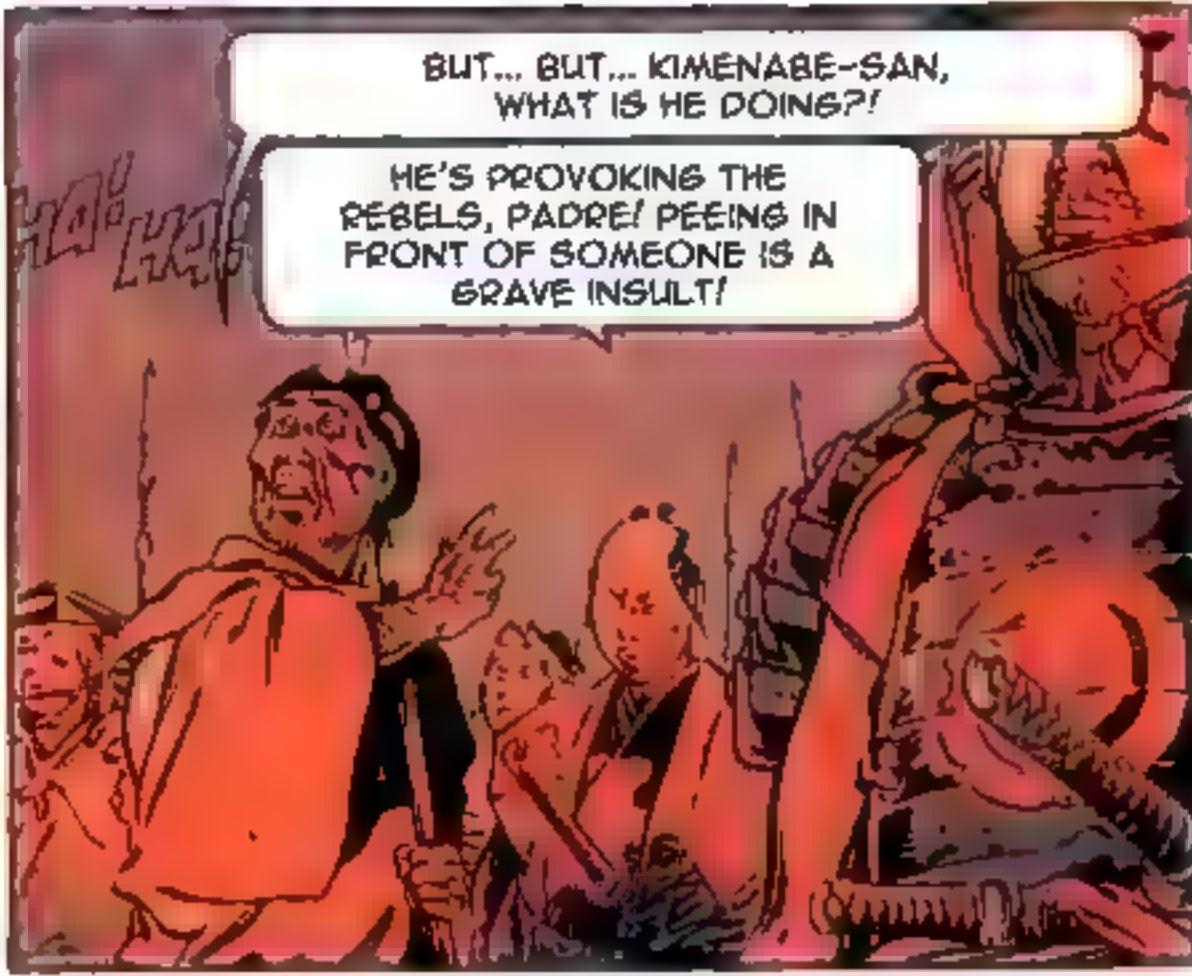
WHAT IS THE NAMAN TRYING TO PROVE, SUFFERING FOR NOTHING?



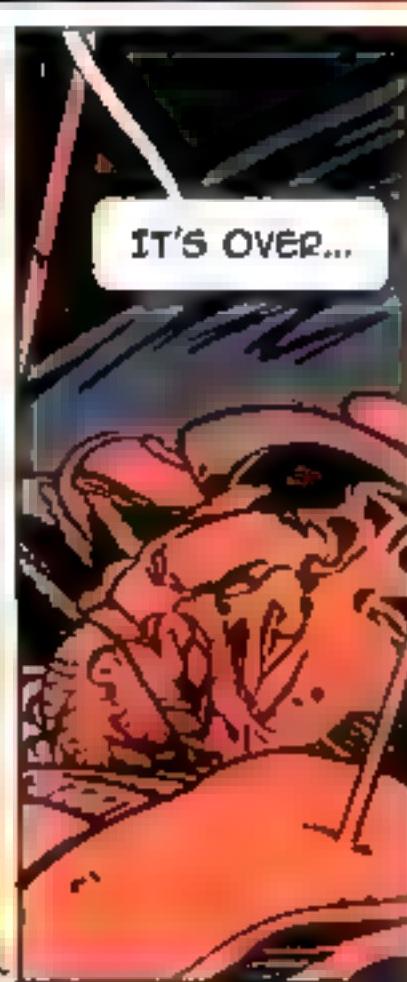
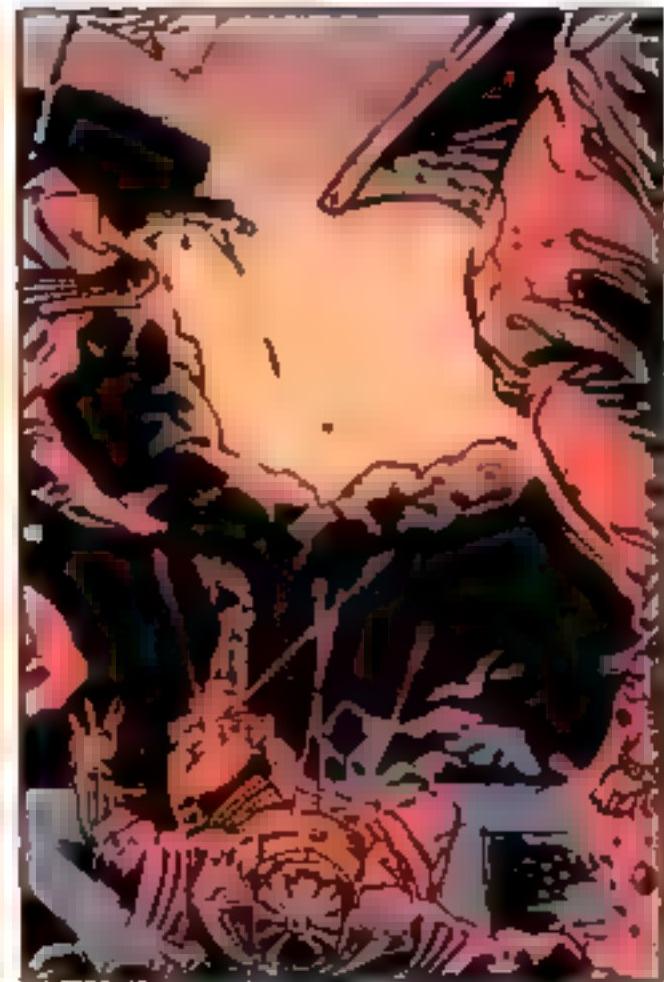
HE SAYS HE'S OFFERING HIS TORMENTS TO HIS GOD SO THAT HE'LL SHOW MERCY ON US! HE ALSO WANTS TO SERVE AS AN EXAMPLE OF COURAGE!

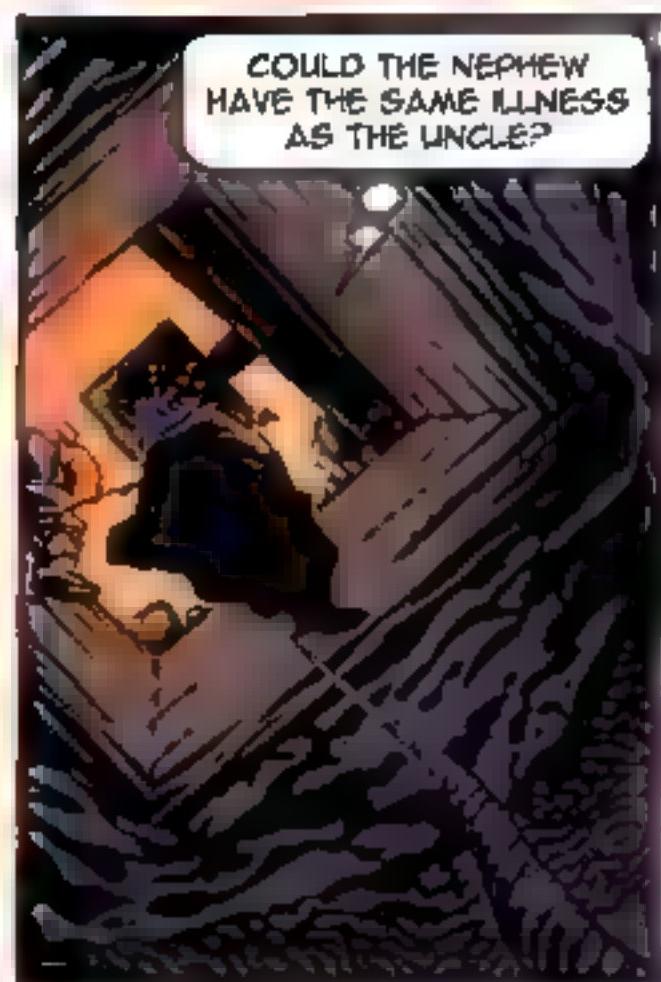
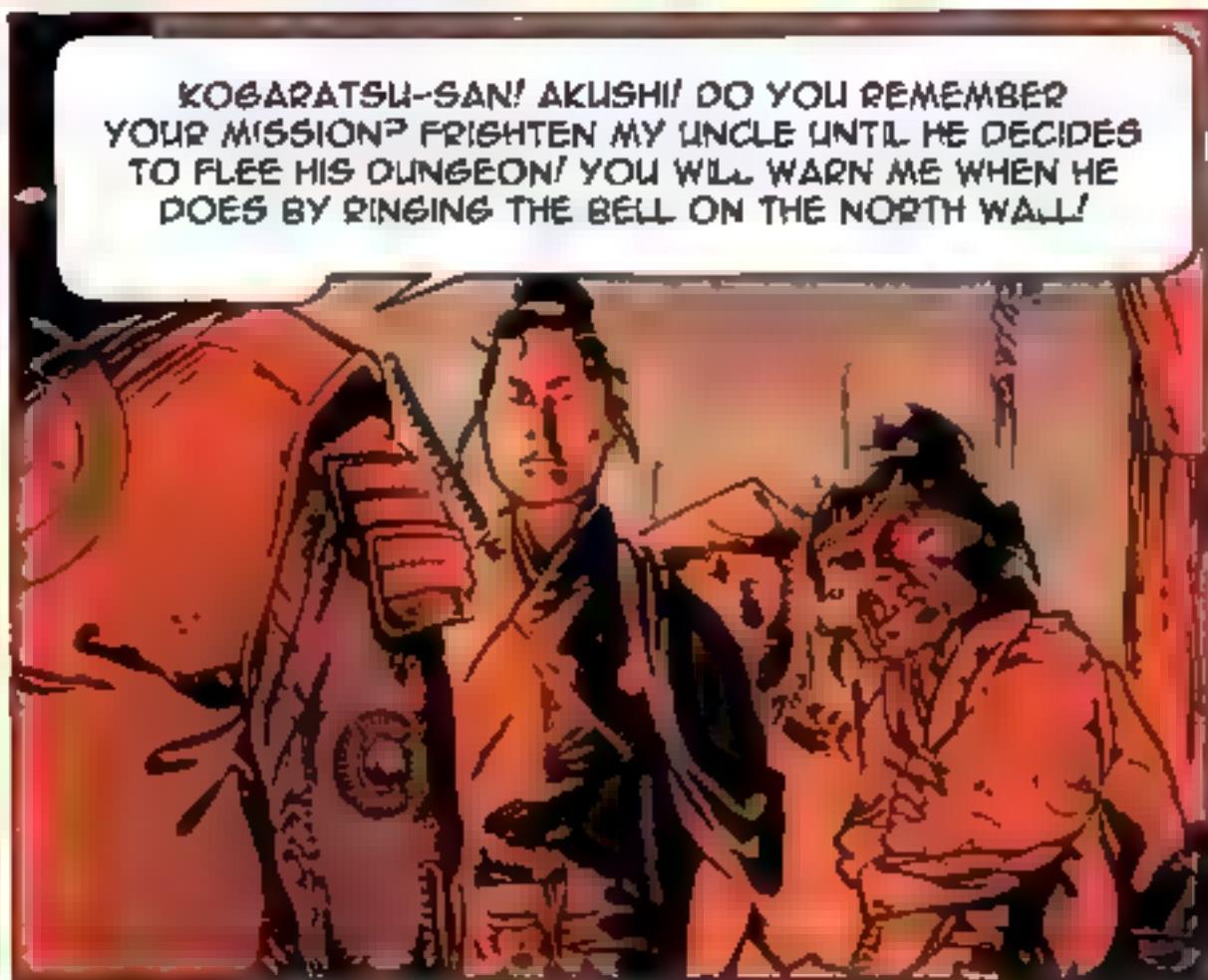
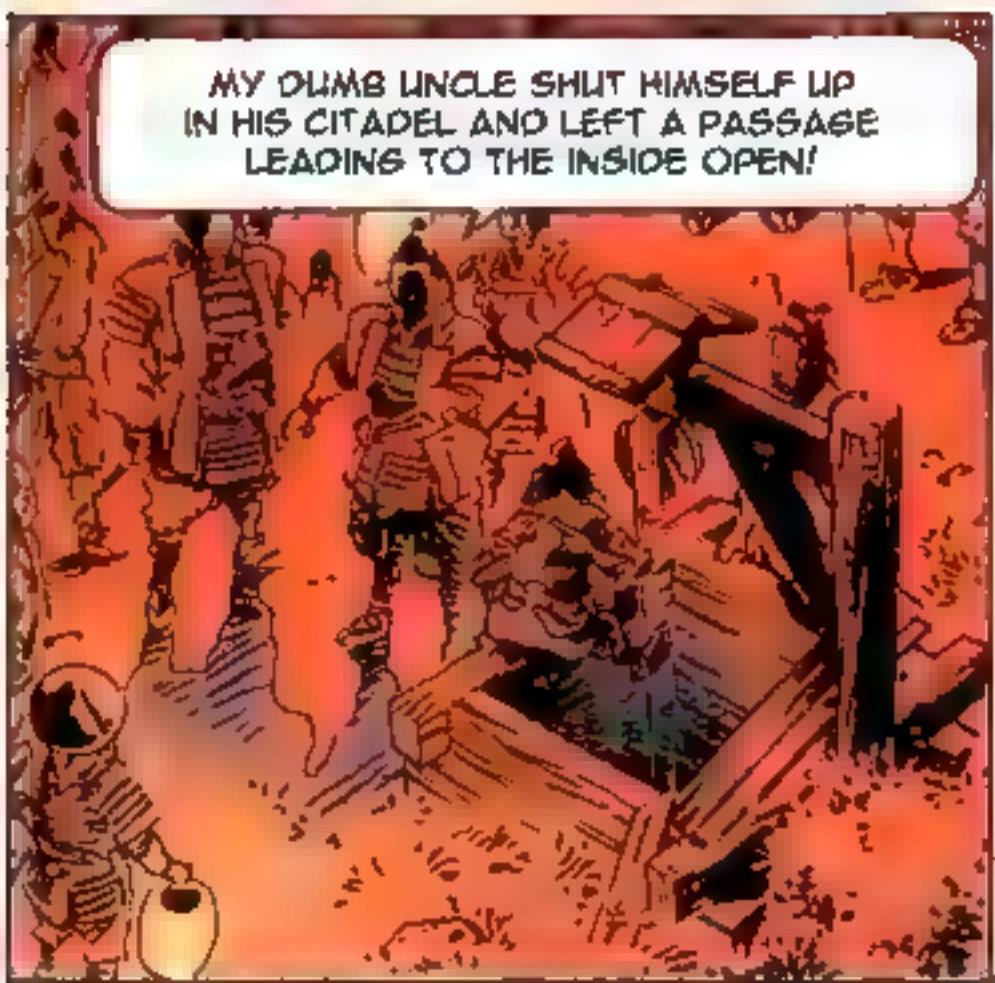
COURAGE?





REBELS! I,
YOKOTA TOBEI
OF ARIMA, PEE
ON YOUR HEADS
AND ON YOUR
DESCENDANTS!
I...





...YOUR BUSHIS ARE DYING USELESSLY,
MATSUMOTO-SAN! YOU WOULD DO
WELL TO REESTABLISH DISCIPLINE!

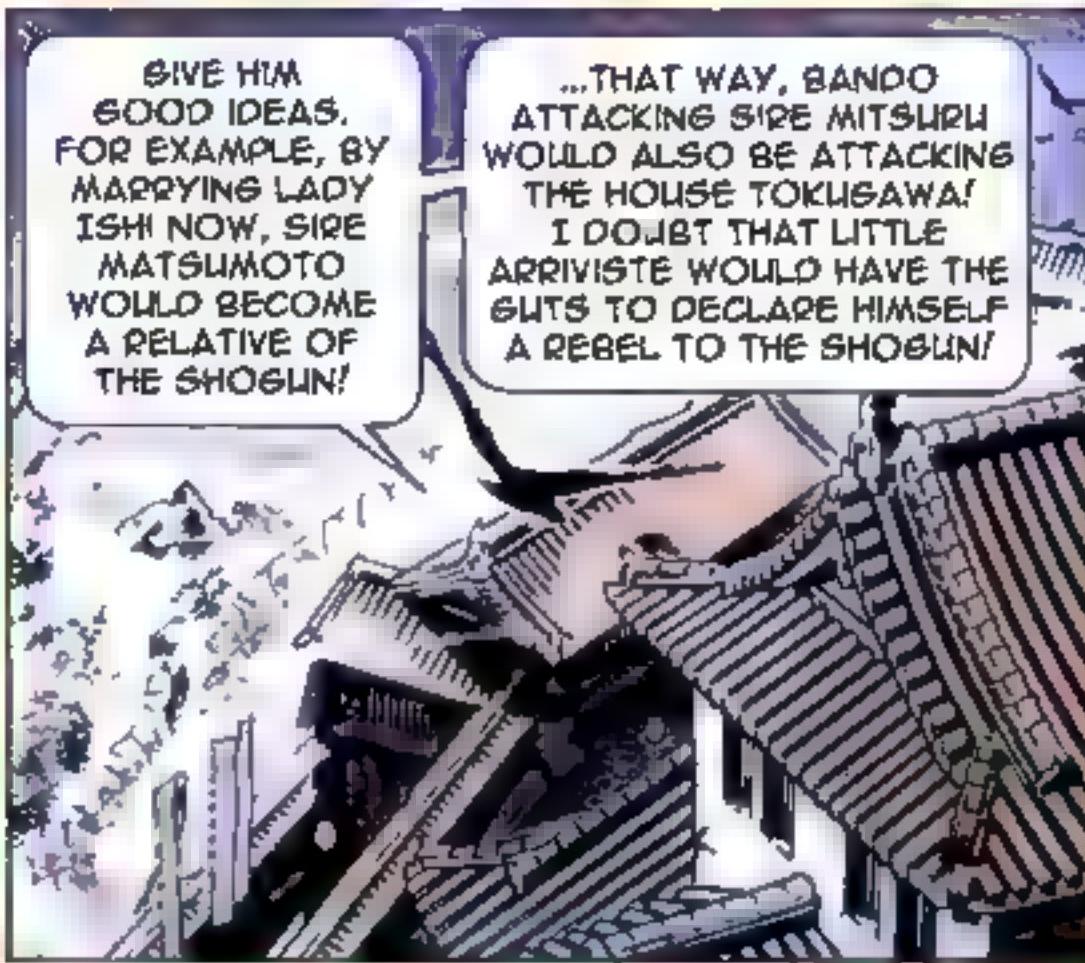
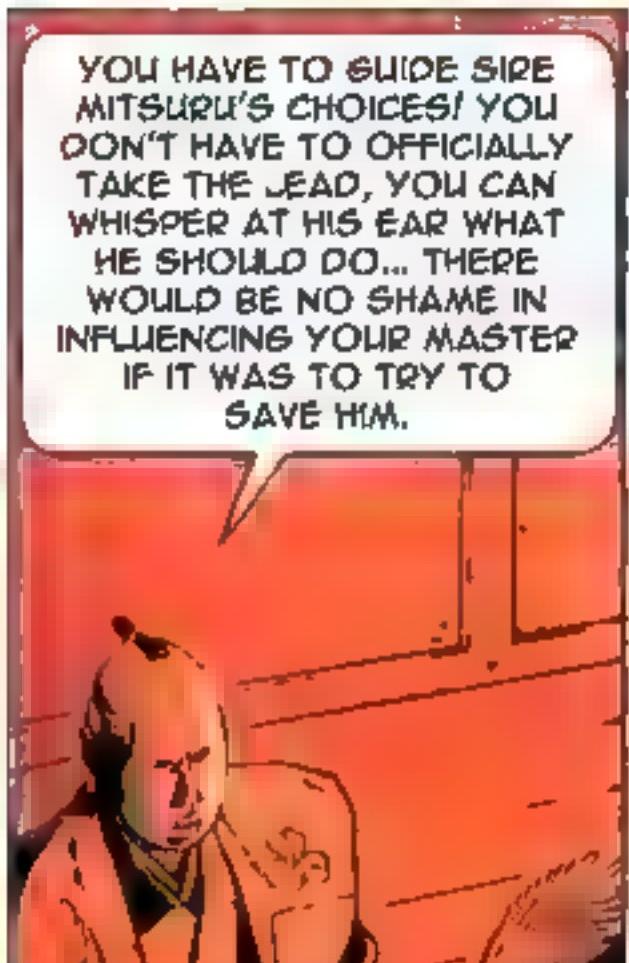
...WHAT DOES YOUR
MASTER INTEND TO DO
TO PROTECT PRINCESS
ISHI? ...DOES HE HAVE A
PLAN? ...A STRATEGY?
...ALLOW ME TO DOUBT
IT!

SIRE MITSURU HAD MESSENGERS
SENT TO THE SHOGUN BEFORE WE
WERE BESIEGED! REINFORCEMENTS
SHOULD ARRIVE SOON!

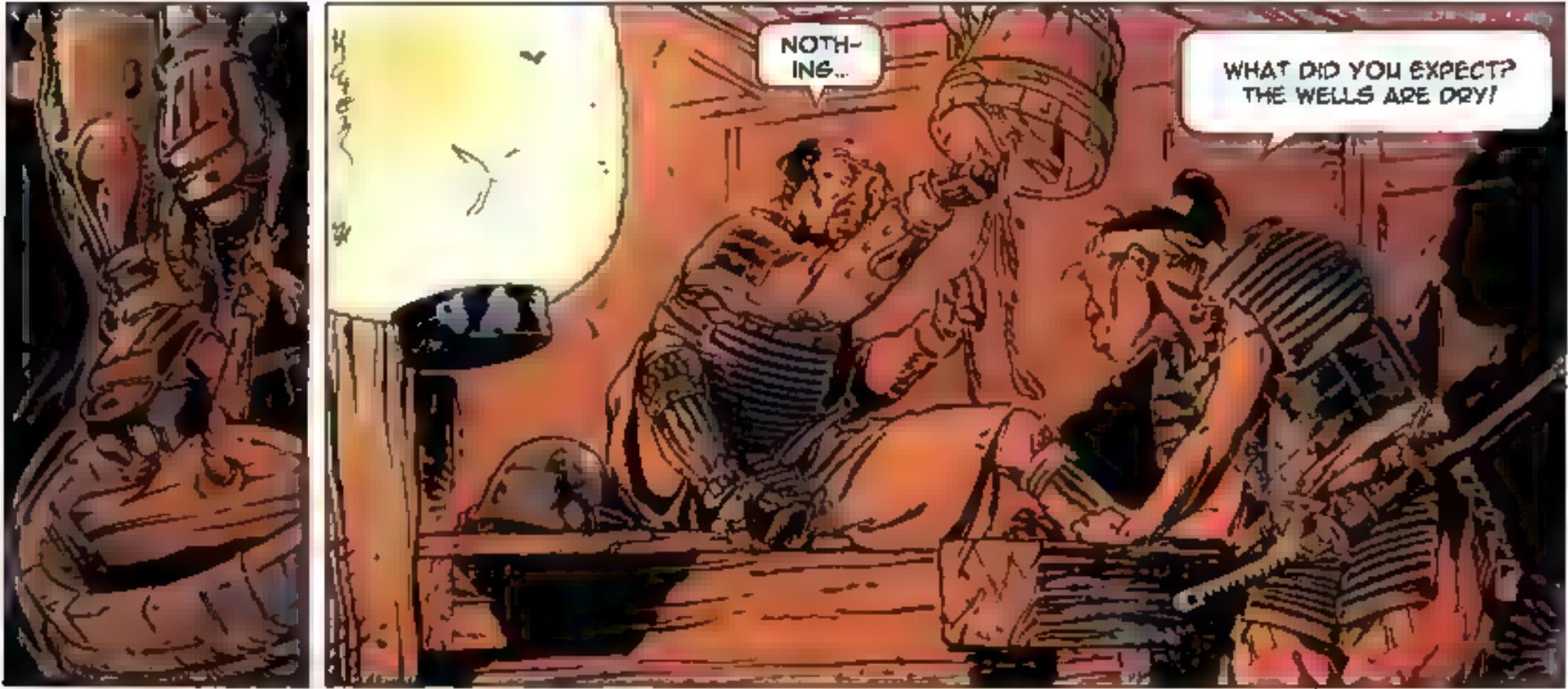
WHY, REALLY? THE SHOGUN HAS
OTHER THINGS TO DO THAN TAKE
CARE OF A TINY PROVINCIAL
UPRISING! IF YOUR MASTER TOOK
HIS RESPONSIBILITIES INSTEAD
OF GETTING DRUNK AND TALKING
TO HIS COW, WE WOULDN'T BE
IN THIS SITUATION!

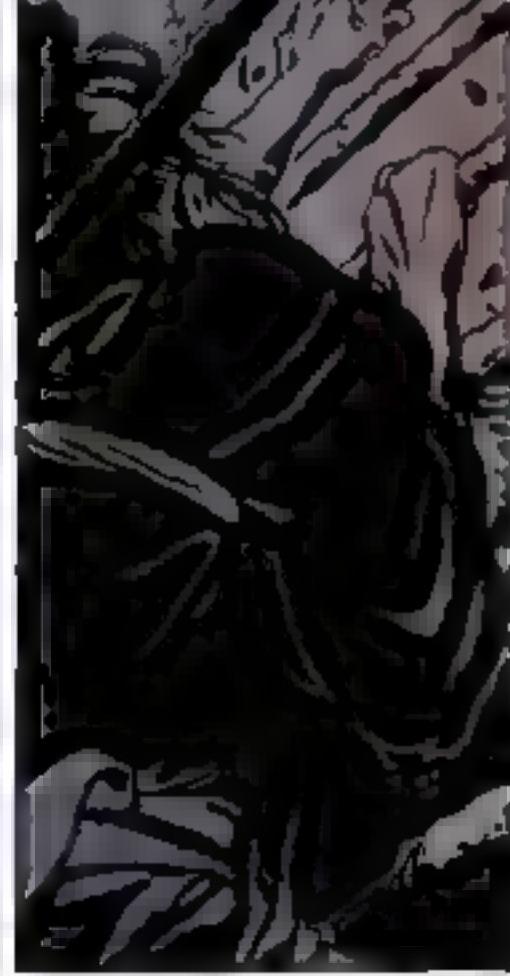
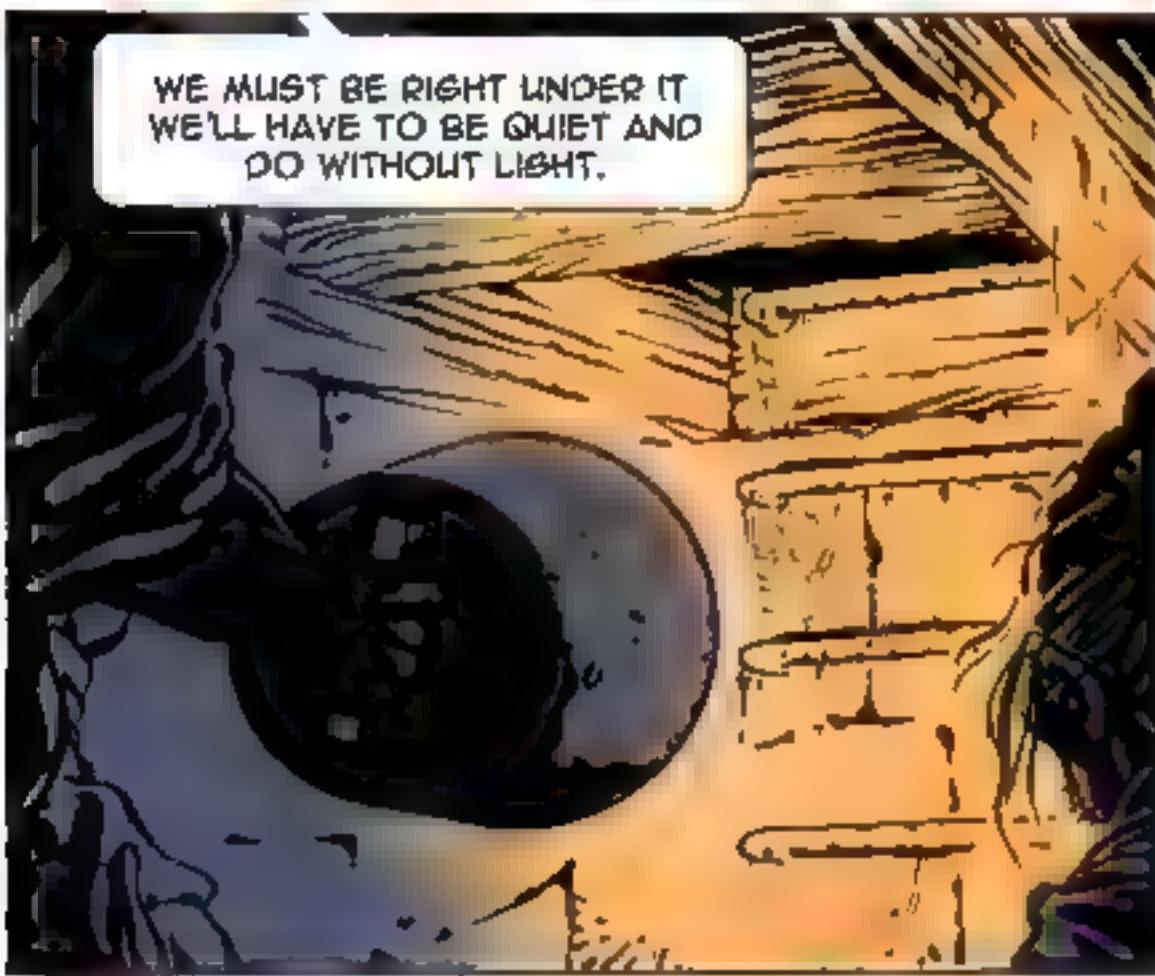
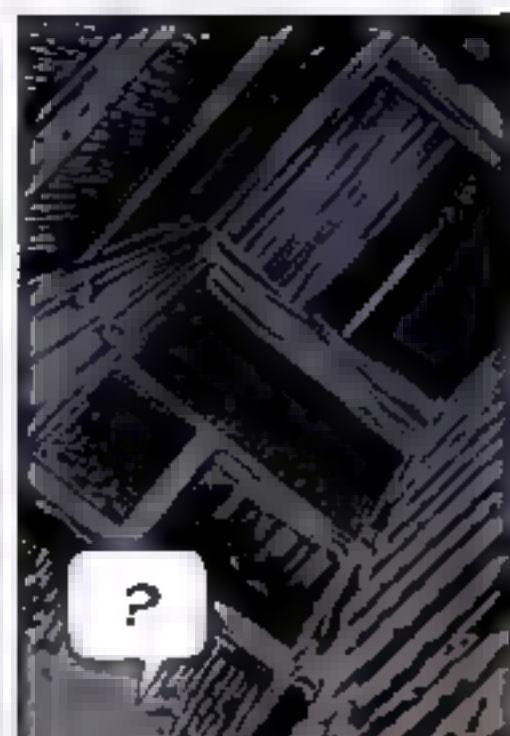
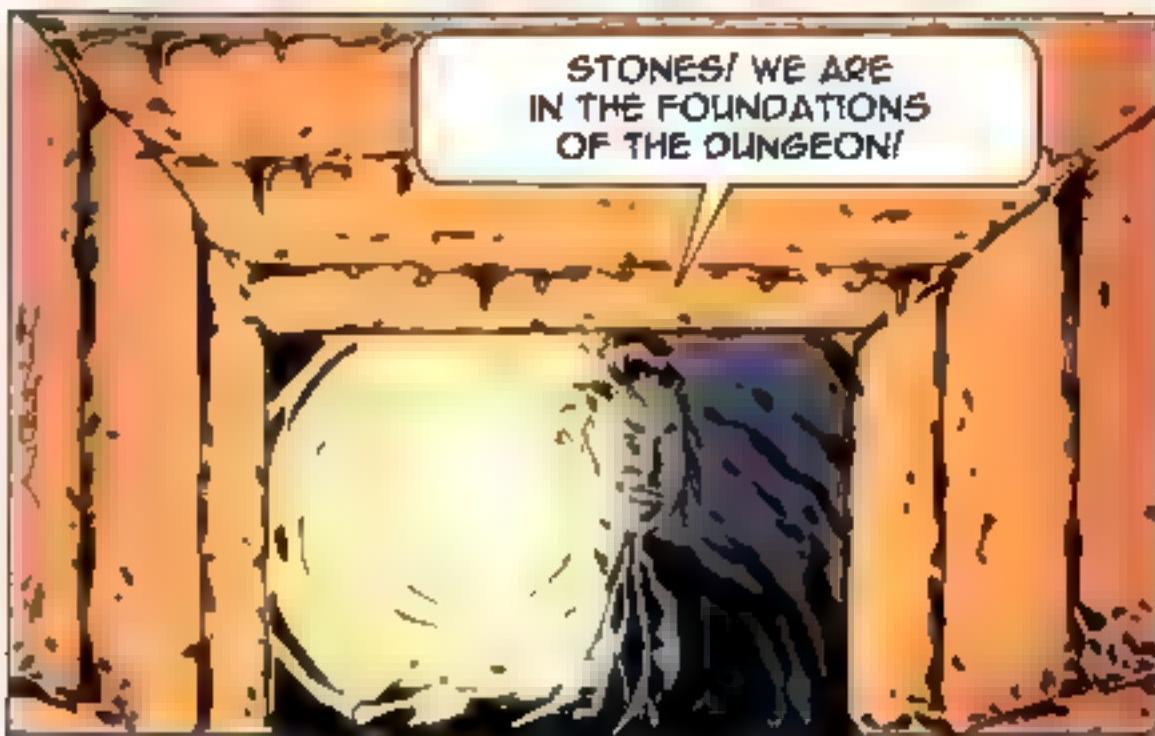
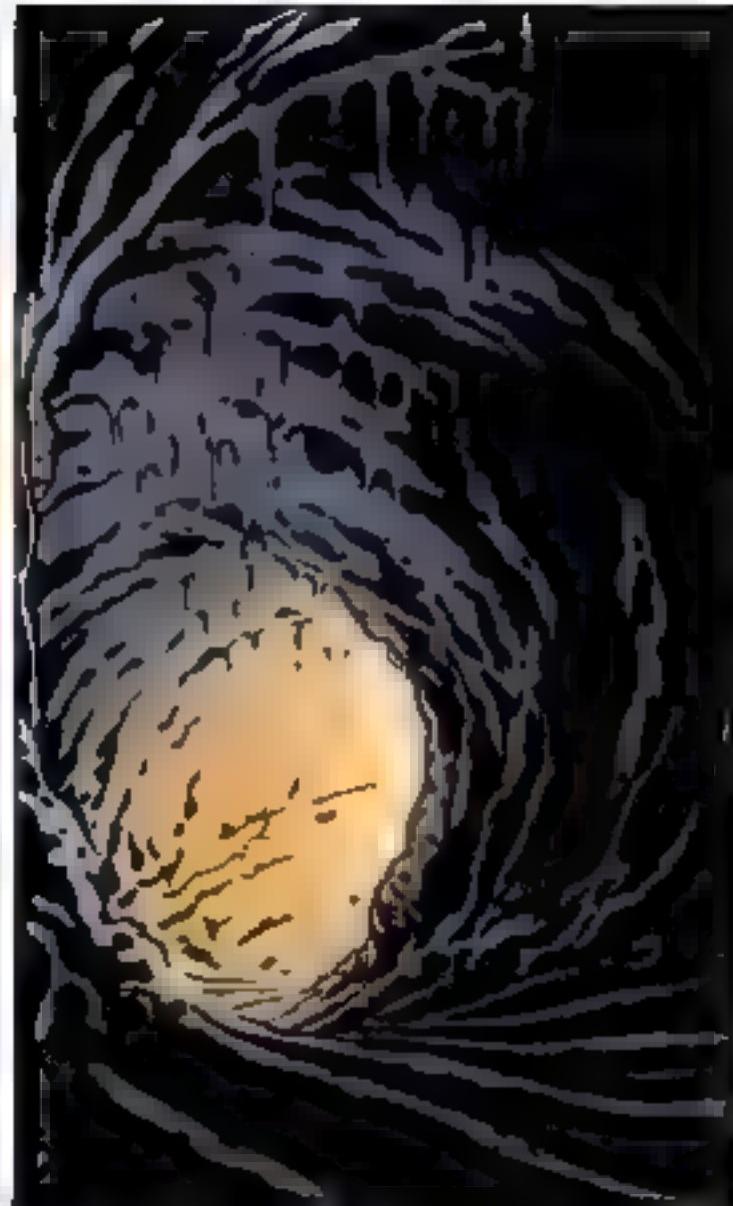
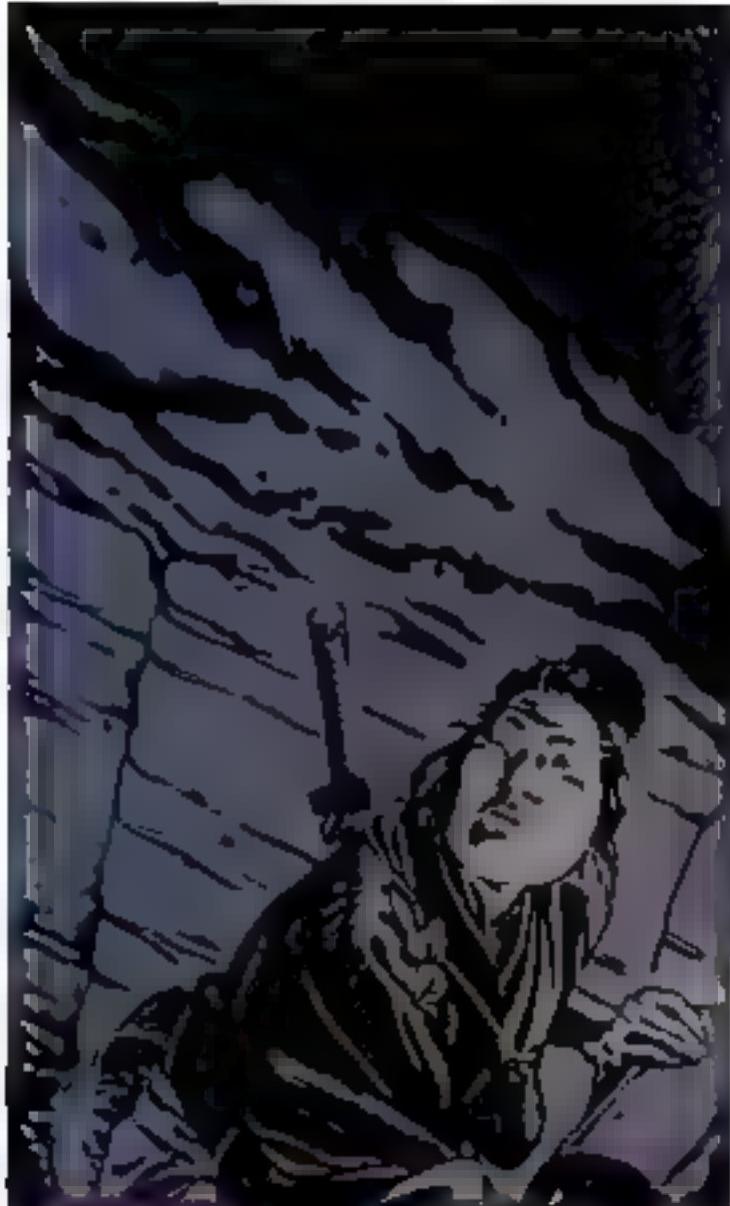
MURASHIGE-SAN... IF IT WASN'T
FOR THE CIRCUMSTANCES... I... I...

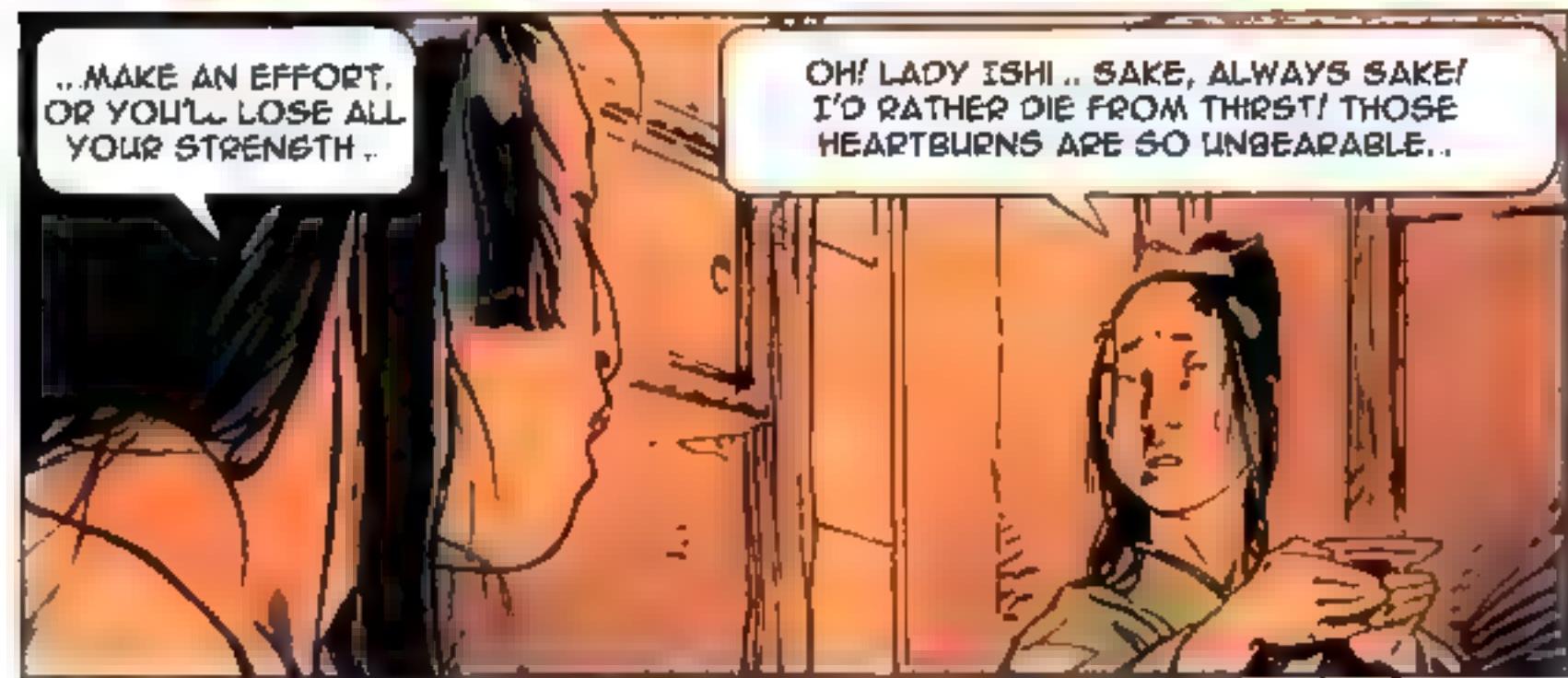
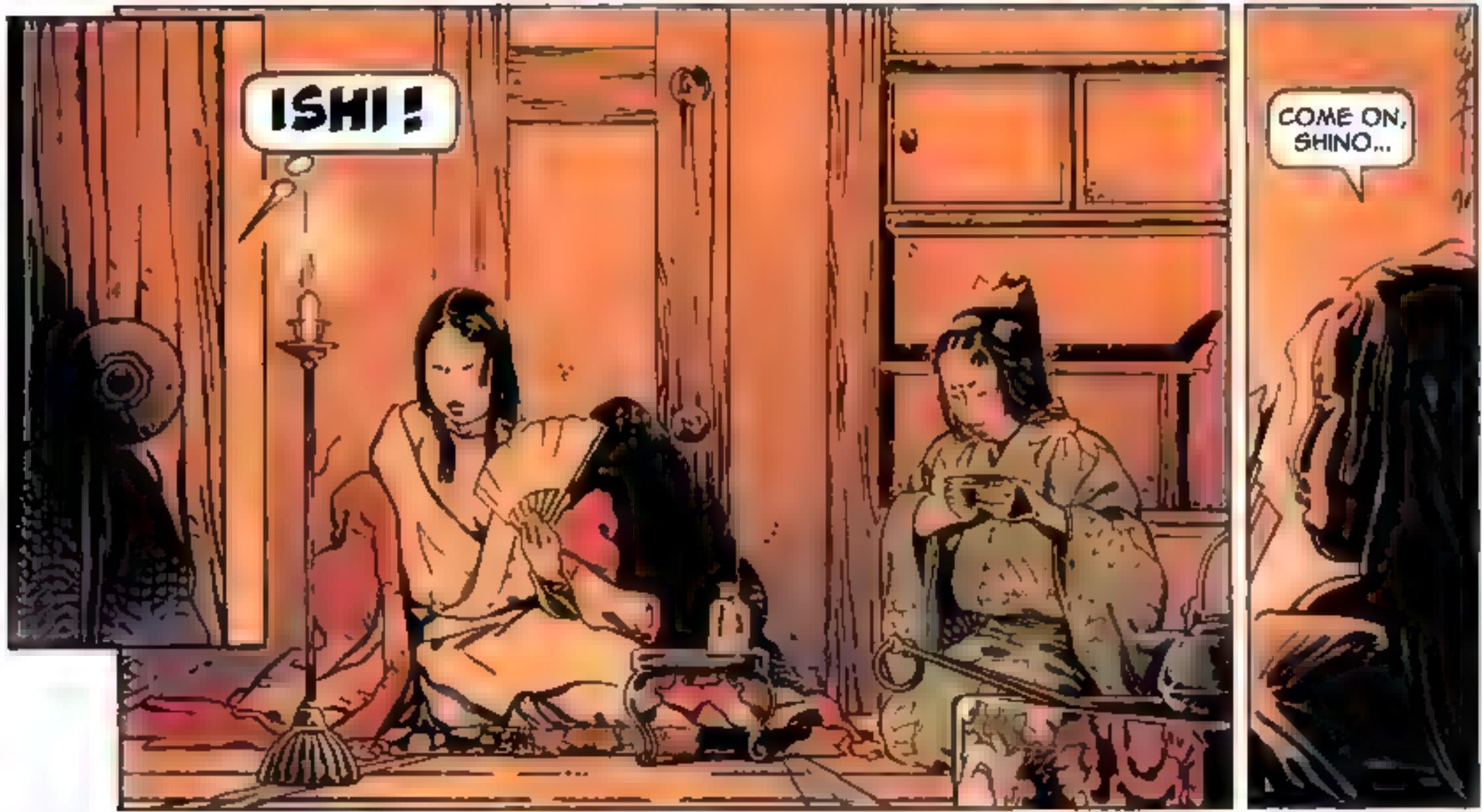
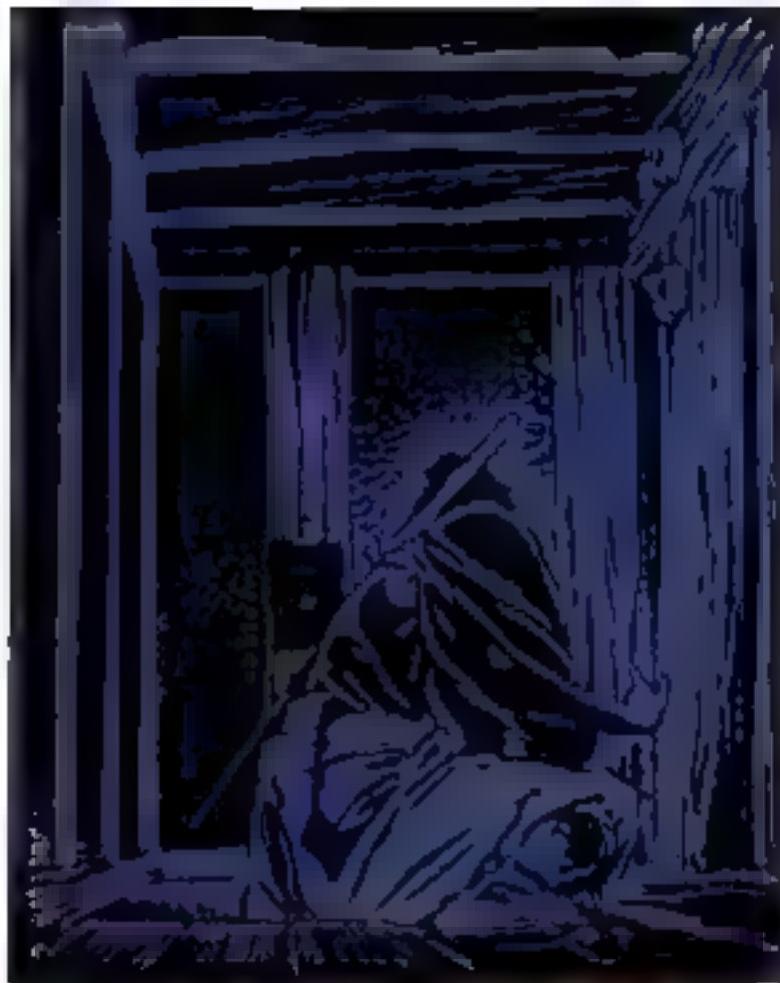
EXCUSE ME, MATSU-
MOTO-SAN, BUT I
HAVE THINGS TO DO!

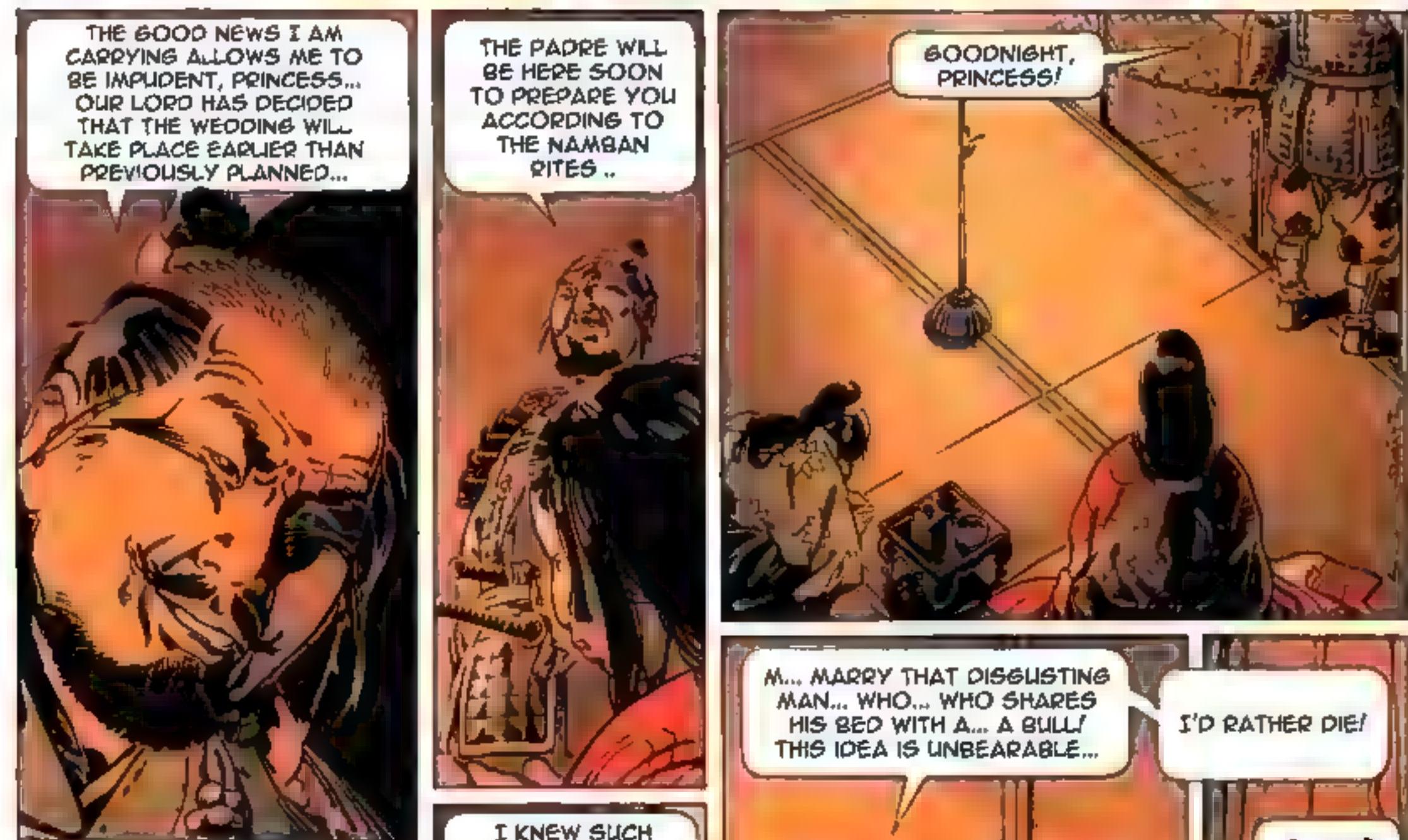
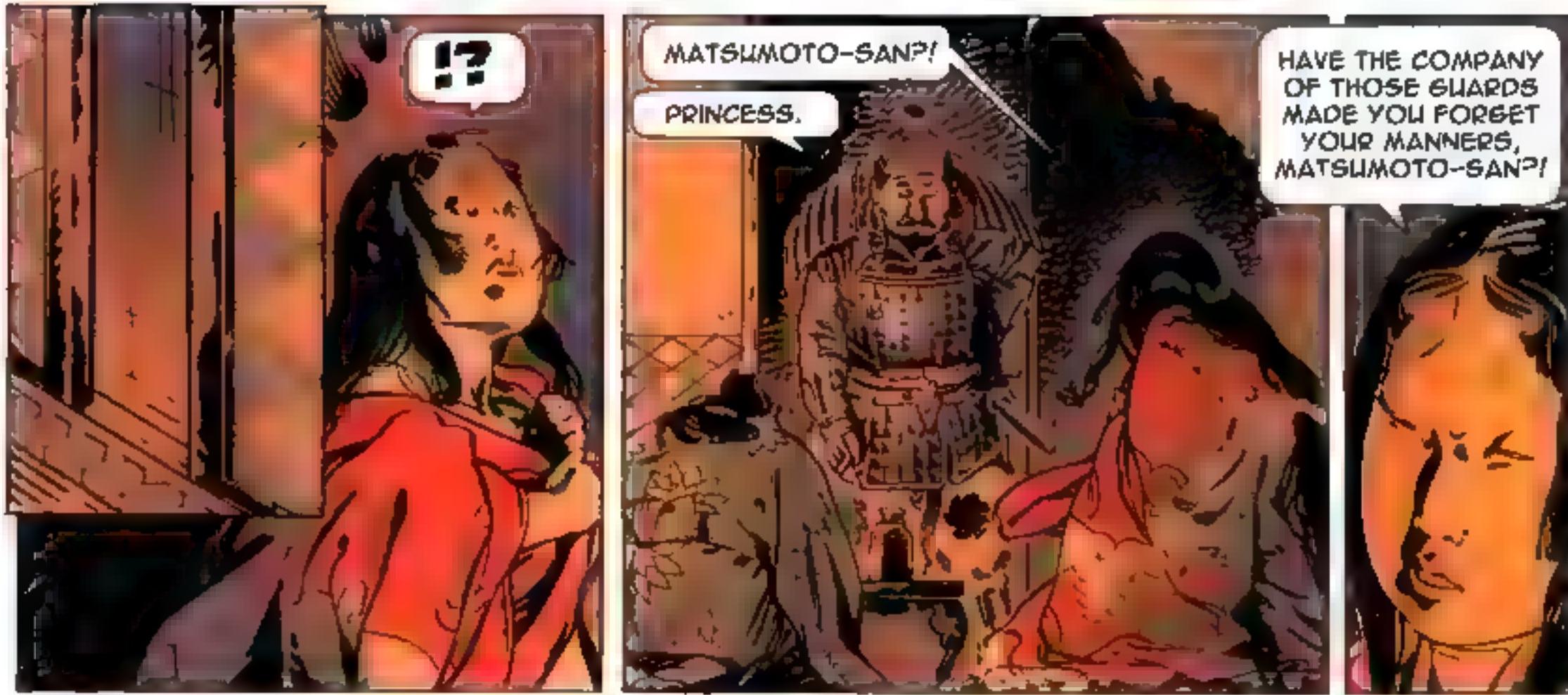


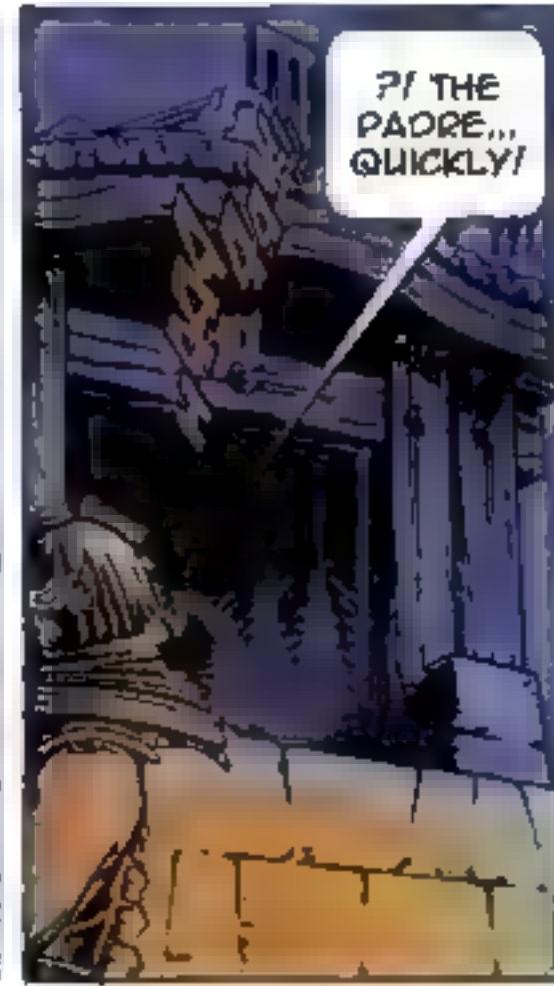
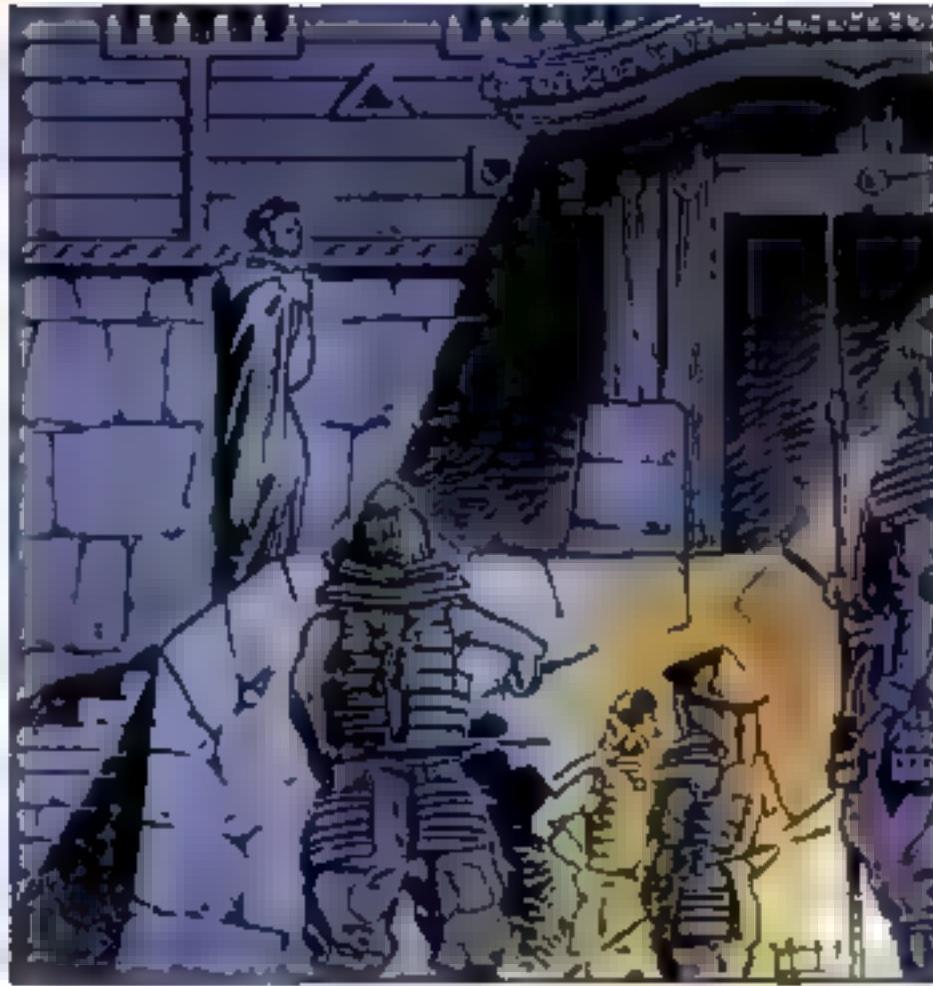
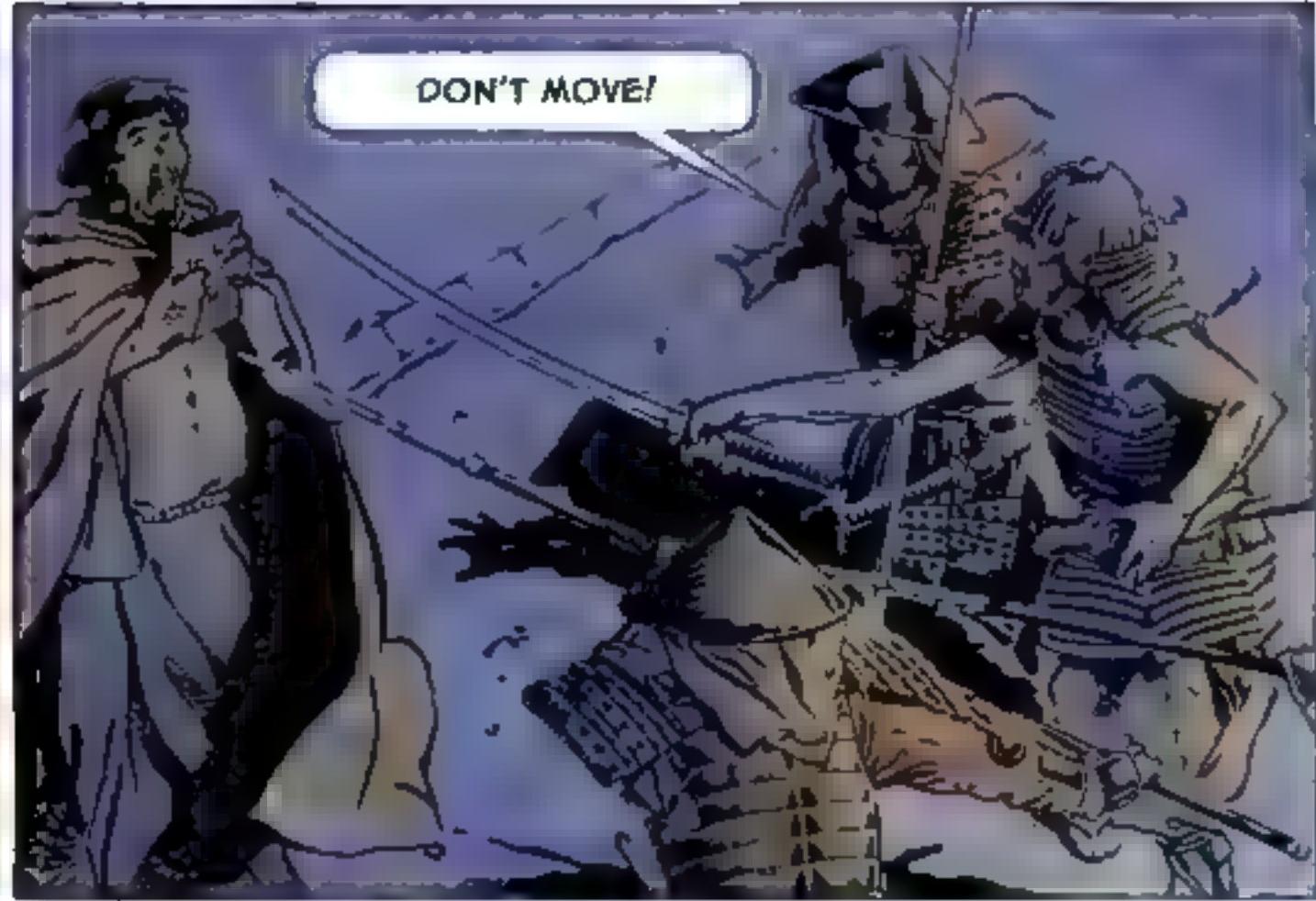


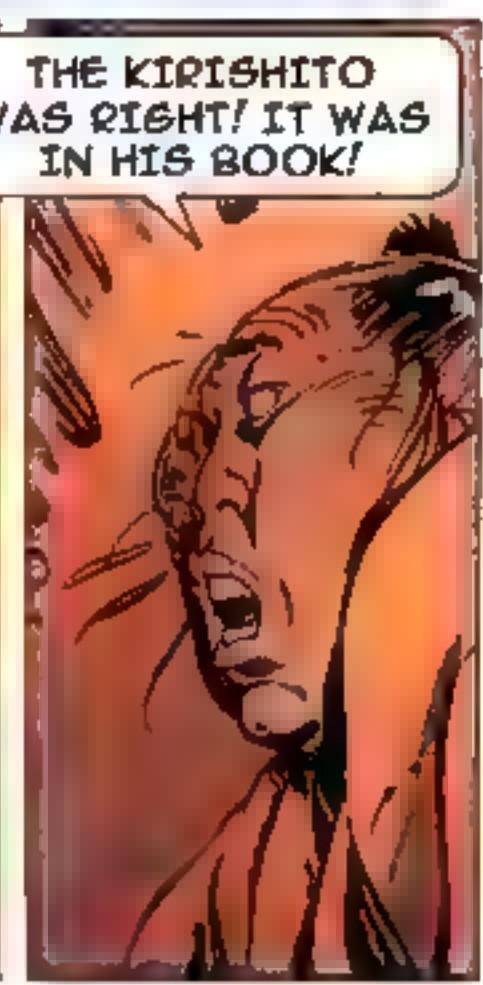
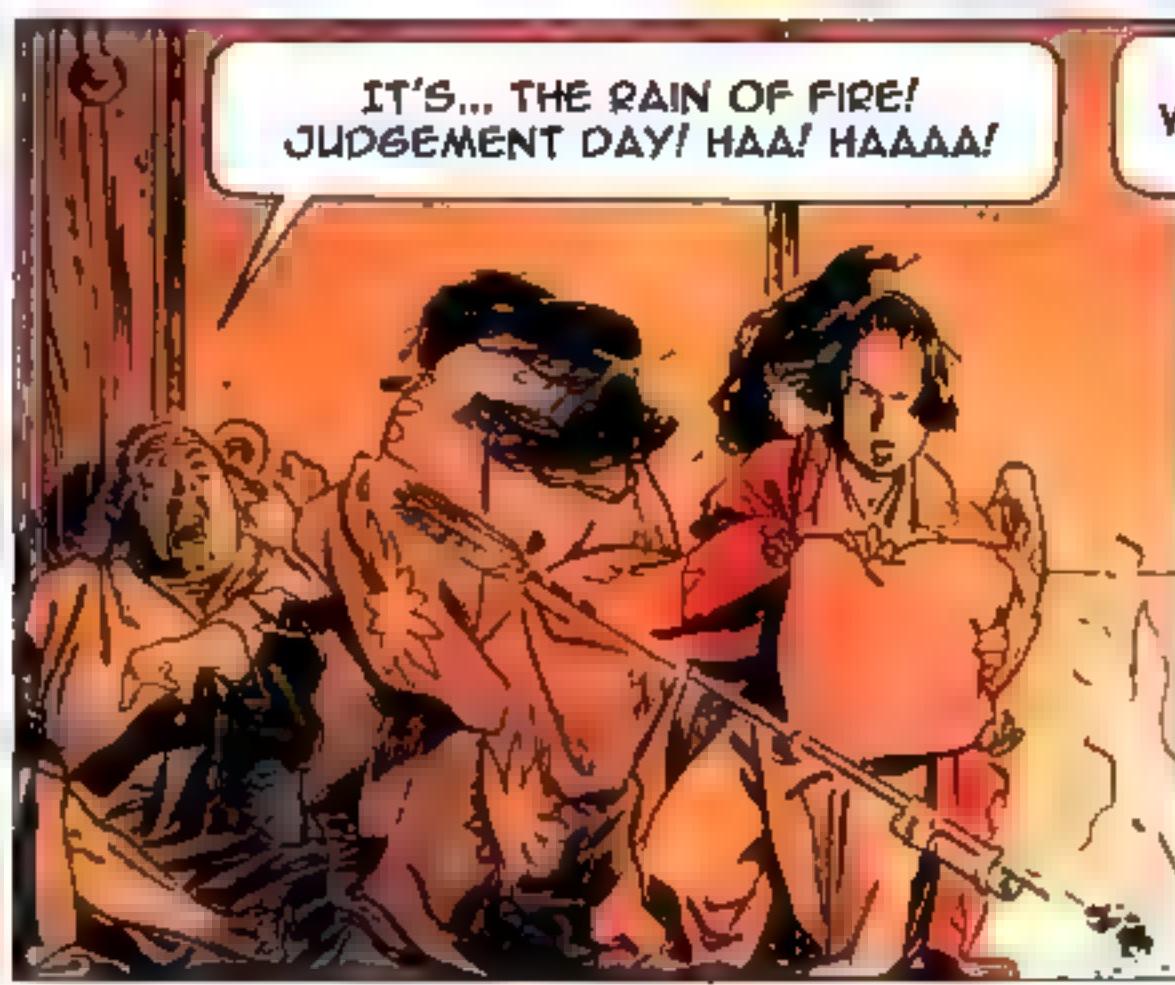
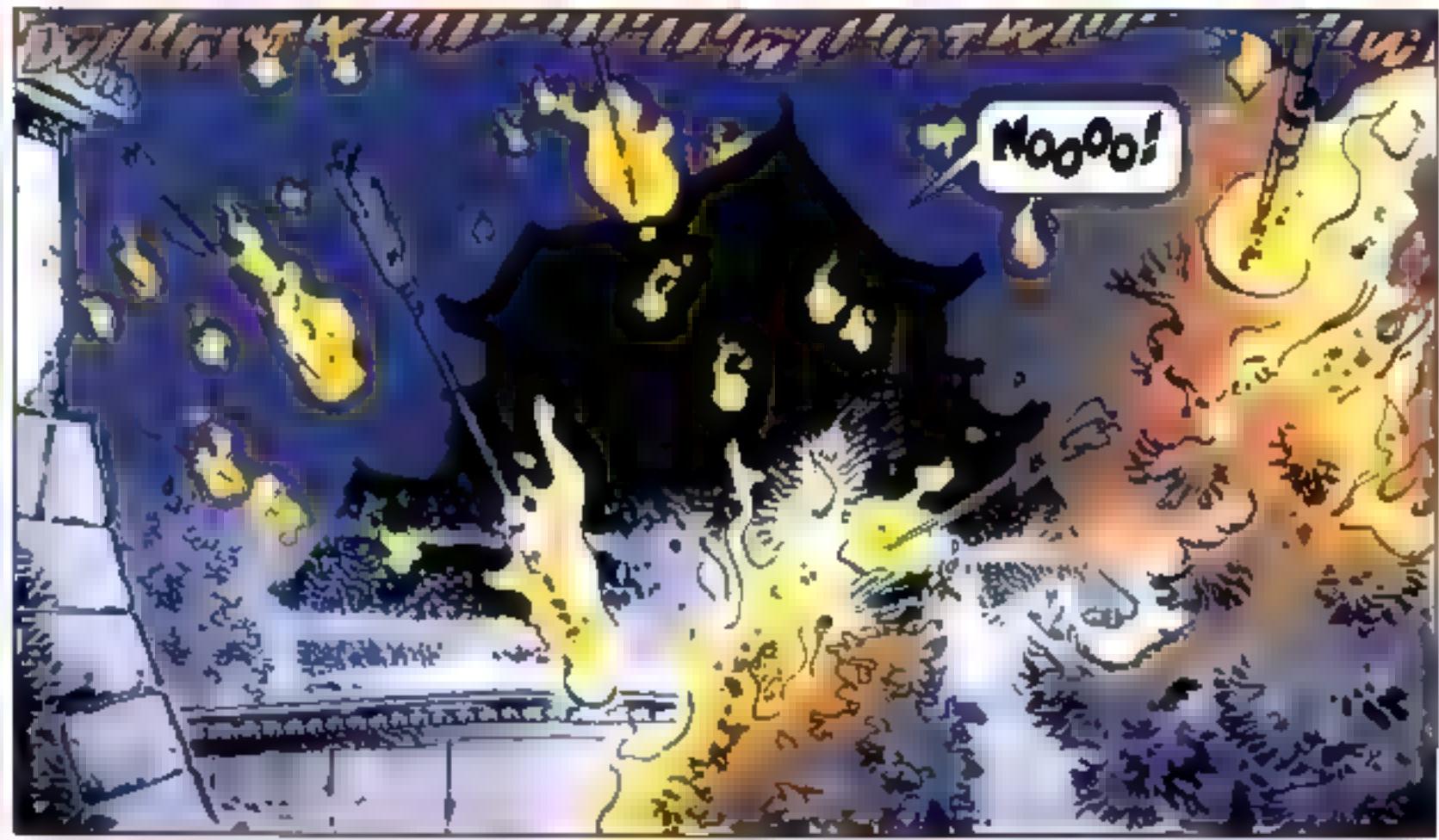
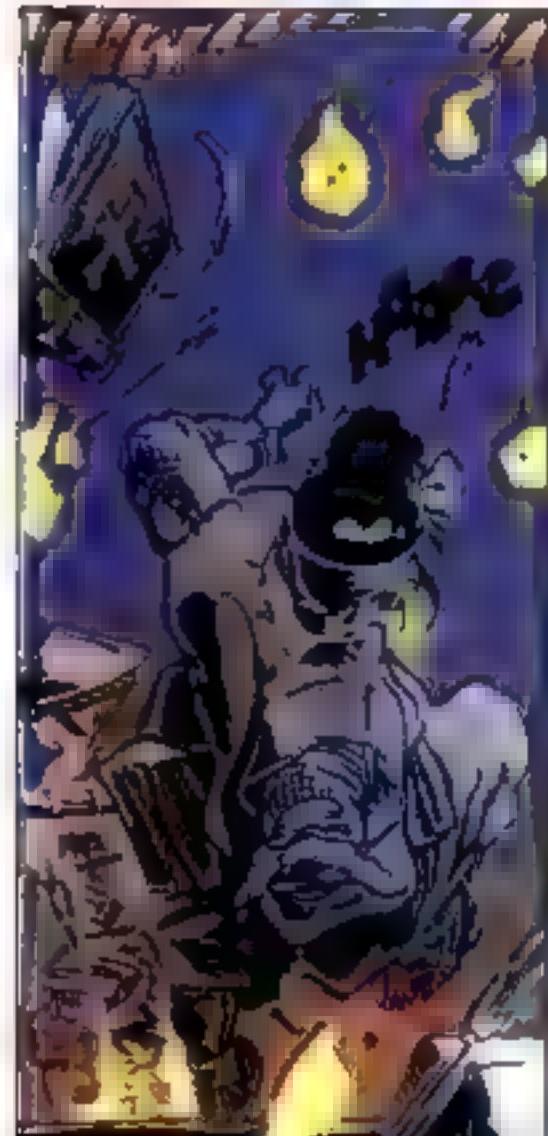








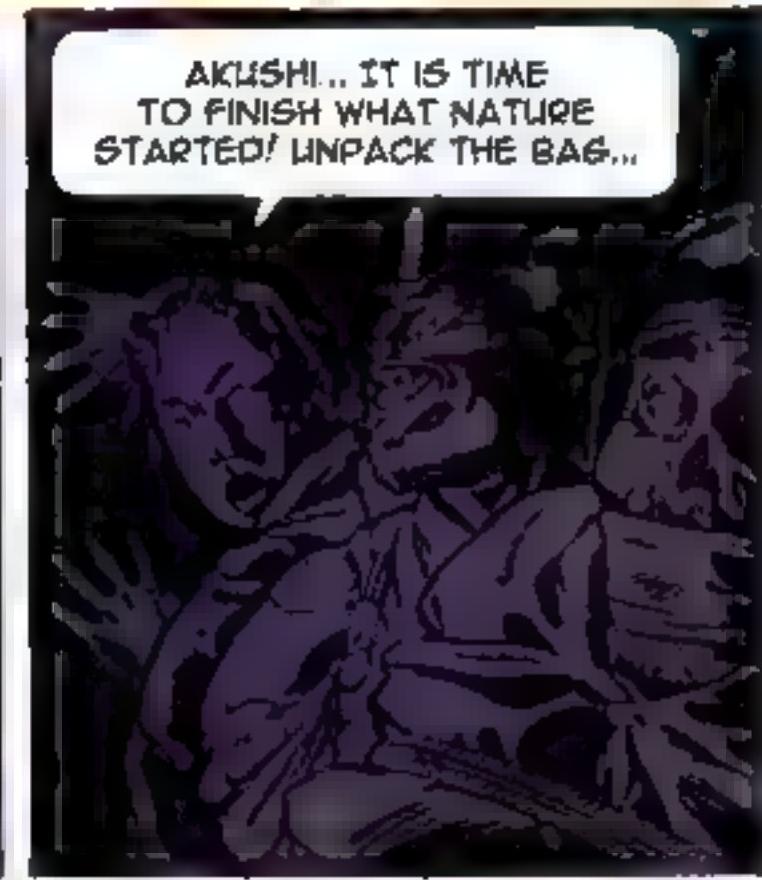




RIDICULOUS! IF THE REBELS THINK THEY'RE GOING TO FRIGHTEN US WITH A FEW WHISTLING ARROWS...

AT THE MOMENT, WE MUST PUT OUT THE FIRES! WE'LL MAKE FUN OF THEM LATER, IF NEED BE!

I THINK THERE IS EVEN LESS REASON TO LIGHT FIRES BETWEEN YOU TWO! POSTPONE YOUR ARGUING, PLEASE! THERE IS WORK TO BE DONE!



I PERSONALLY INTERROGATED THE PATROL WHO SAW THE PADRE FOR THE LAST TIME I HAD THE WHOLE FORTRESS SEARCHED... NOTHING! THE KIRISHITO COMPLETELY DISAPPEARED!

SOP...

YOUR MEN ARE AFRAID! THEIR SPIRITS WERE ALREADY UNDERRMINED BY THE TRIALS AND PRIVATIONS! WE MIGHT HAVE TO FACE AN UPRISING!

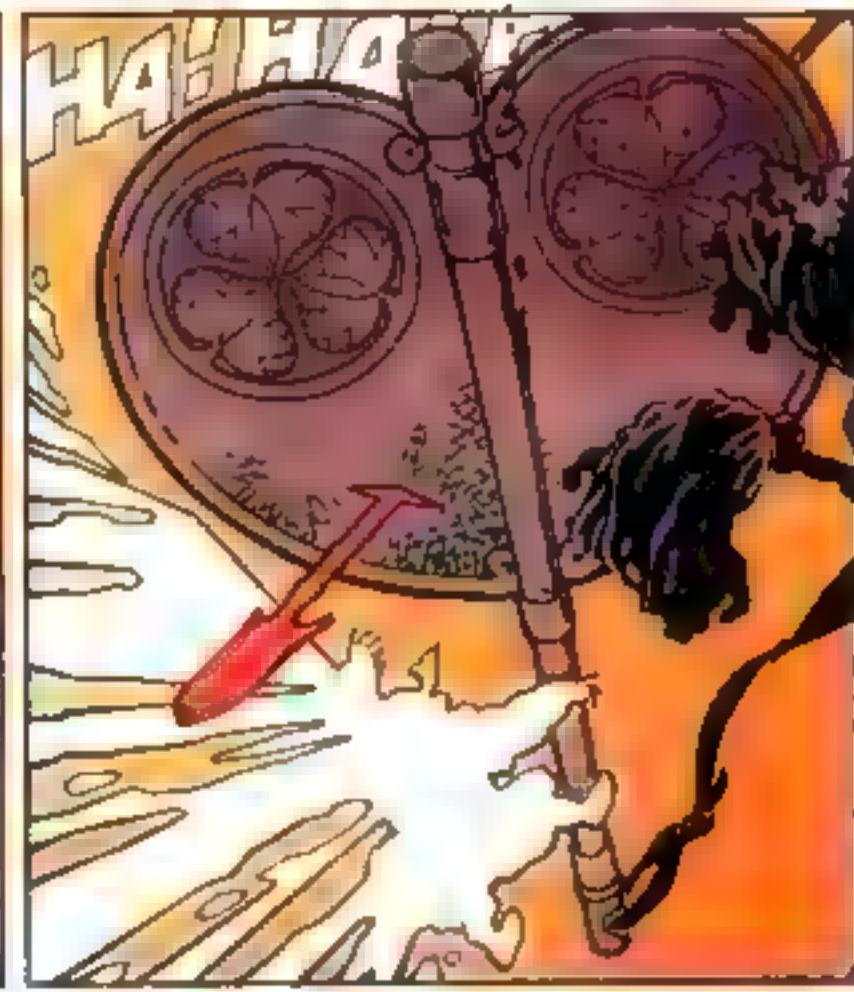
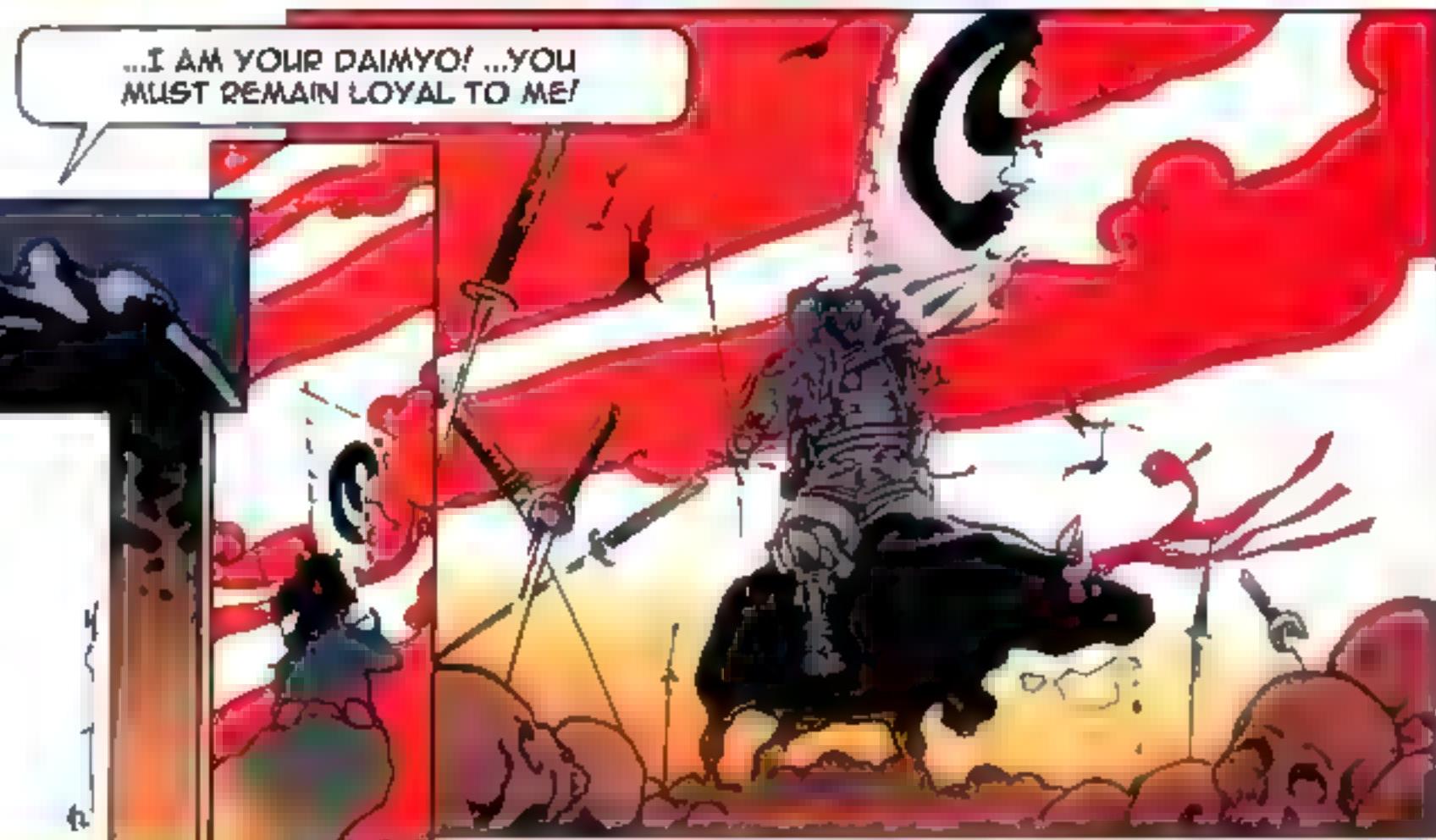
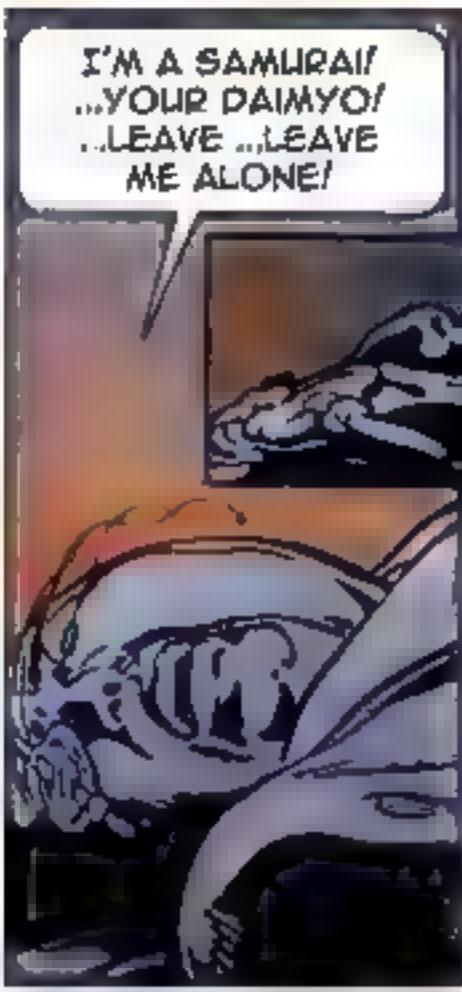
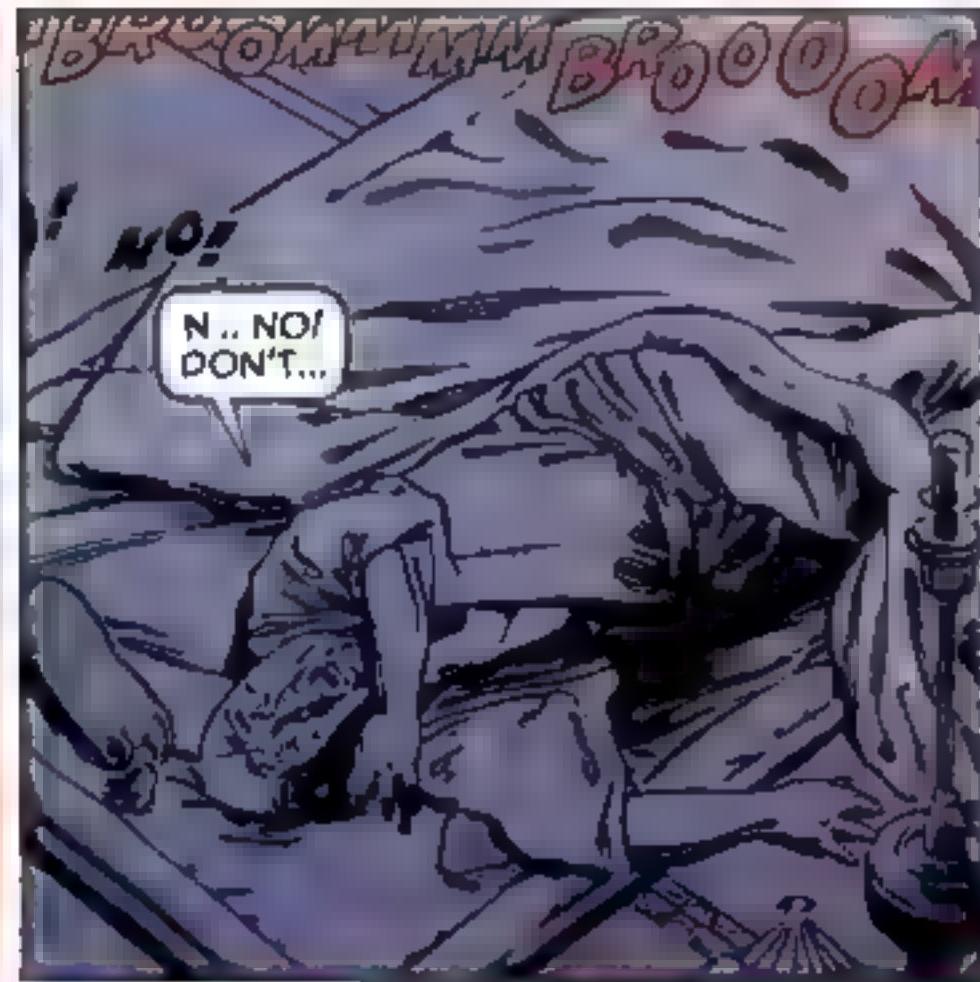
FORGIVE MY BOLDNESS, MY LORD, BUT IT IS TRUE! OFFICERS FEEL THEIR INFLUENCE OVER OUR MEN IS FADING DANGEROUSLY!

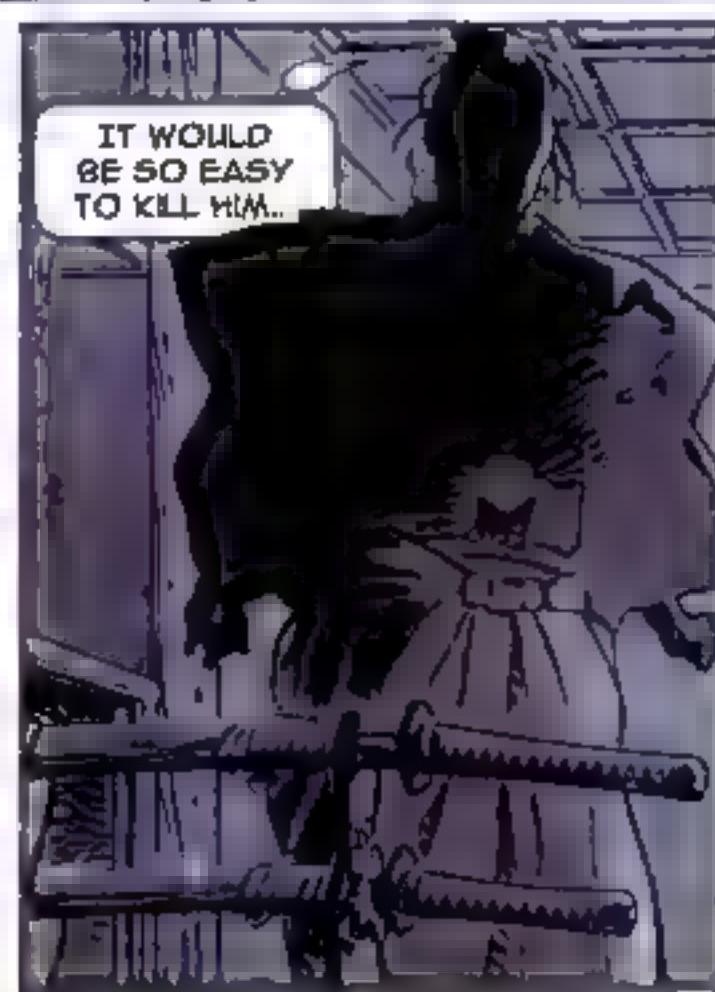
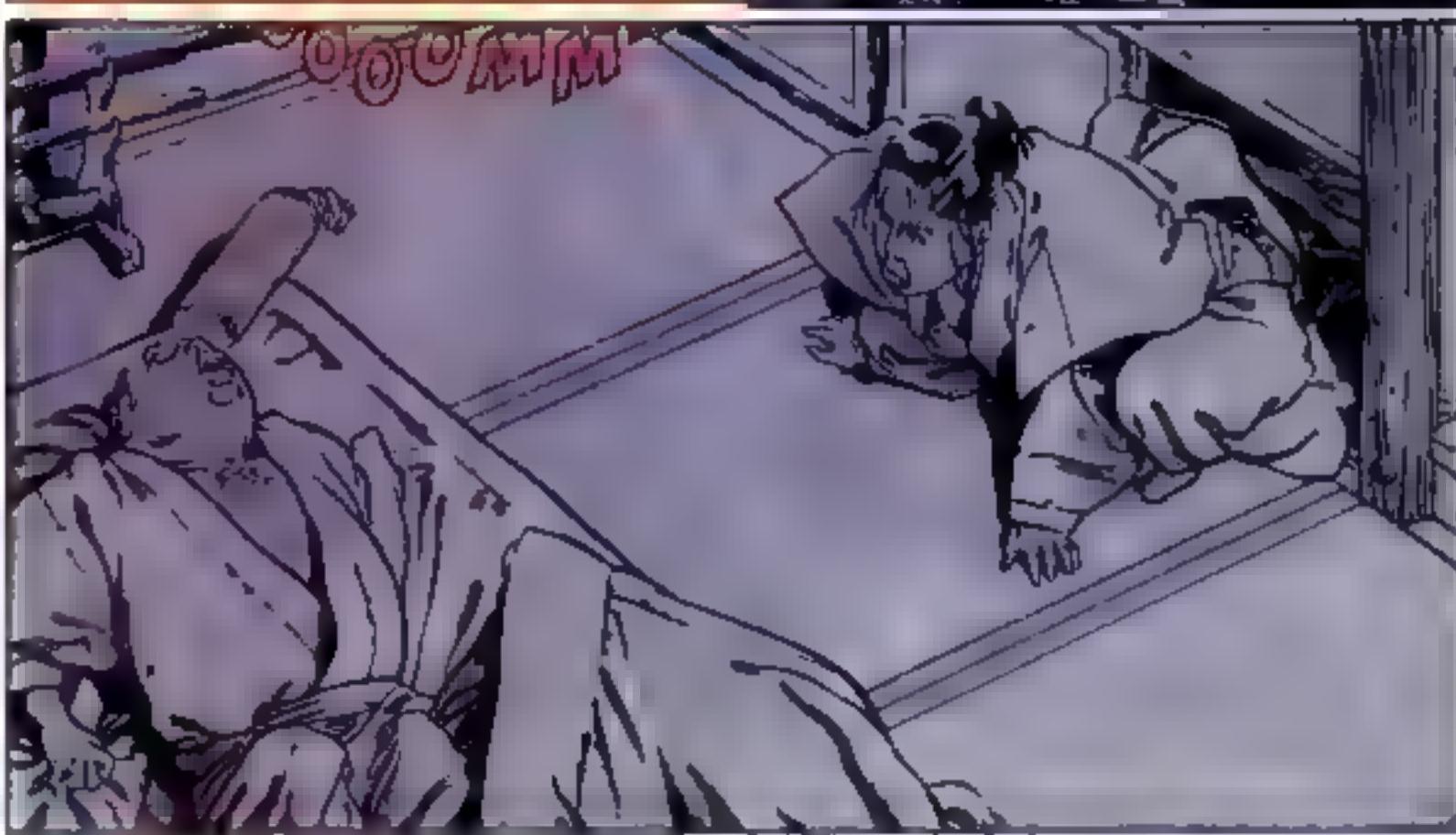
FUJITA-SAN WHAT IS SIRE MITSURU'S OPINION?

SIRE MITSURU SUFFERED MUCH FROM THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE KIR SHITO, WHO WAS HIS CONFIDENTIAL. HE TOOK HIS CHINESE MEDICINE, AND IS NOW SLEEPING TO FORGET ALL HIS SORROWS.

IT BECOMES URGENT TO DO SOMETHING... WHILE WE STILL CAN...

BRoooooMMMM



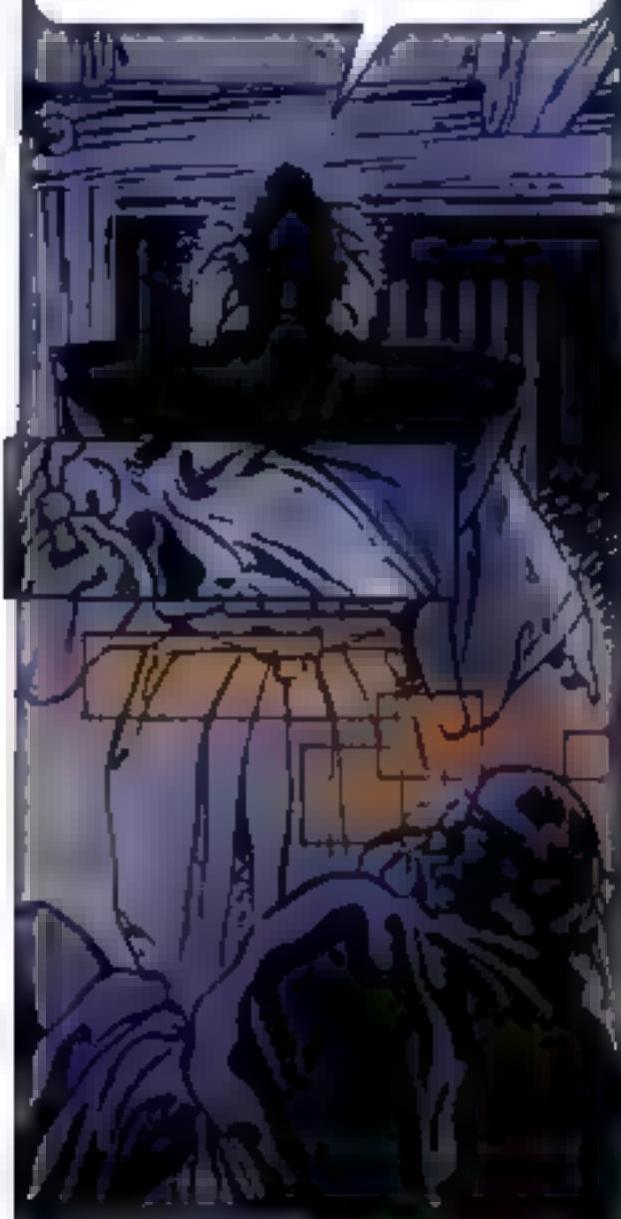


"TREACHERY IS TAKING
MY LIFE."

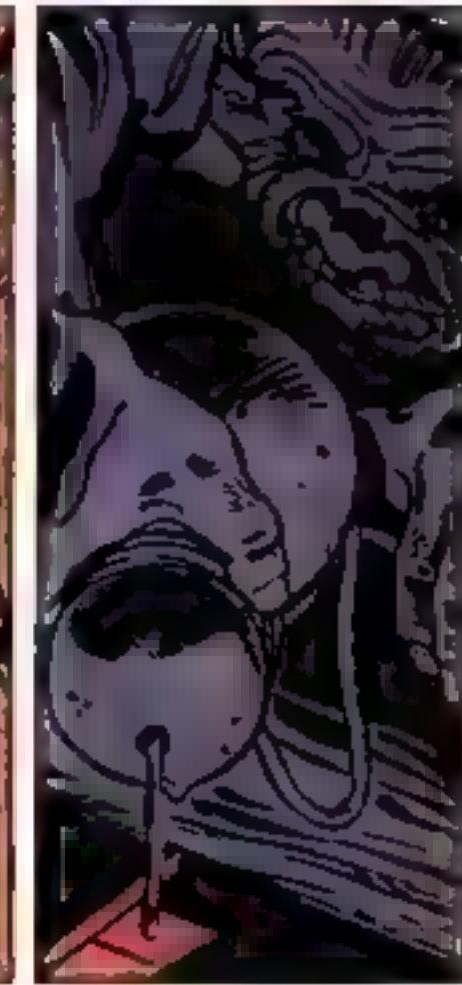
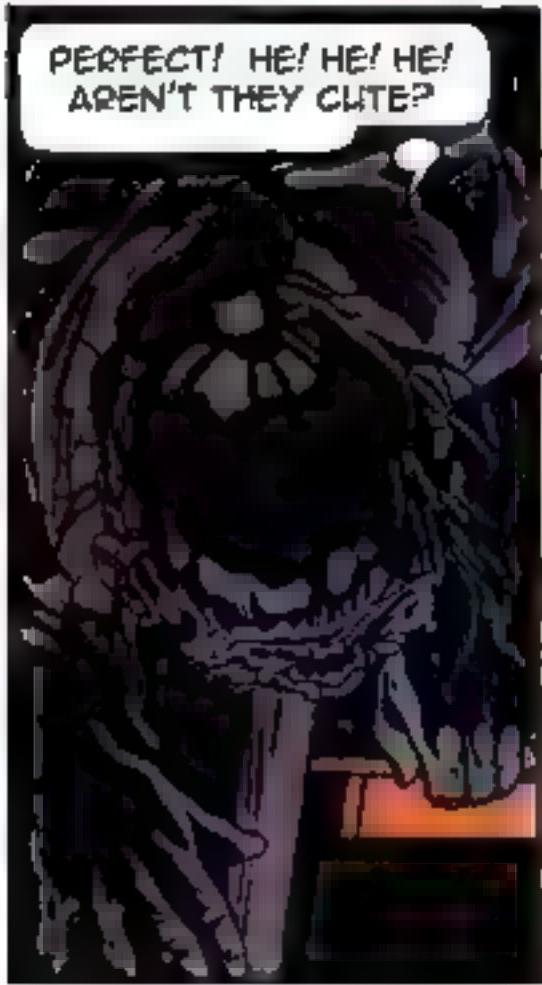
"A BLOOD LOTUS HAS
BLOOMED WITHIN MY CHEST."

"FLOWER PLANTED BY A
SUPERB BLADE!"

YO... YOSHIDA!









WE ARE SAVED, MATSUMOTO-SAN! NOW IT WON'T BE DIFFICULT TO WAIT FOR THE SHOSUN'S REINFORCEMENTS!

HMM...

IT WOULD BE A GOOD THING TO TELL SIRE MITSURU. HE'LL BE HAPPY TO LEARN THAT FORTUNE FINALLY LOOKED UPON US!

THIS RAIN IS SWEEPING AWAY MY LAST HOPES OF TAKING THE PLACE! WE HAVE LOST...

AND THIS IS ALL BECAUSE OF THAT YOUNG COCK OF KOGARATSU WHO DIDN'T CARRY OUT HIS MISSION IN TIME!

LET'S GO...

ALL WE CAN DO IS PRAY... DAMN RAIN! BUNKA-SAN WAS RIGHT...

NOW I CAN
CONFESS. I HAD
NO HOPE FOR THIS
BATTLE! BUT NOW...

1

WHAT?! SIRE
MITSURU!

SAVE ME! IT'S AN
ORDER! MY BROTHER'S
GHOST IS TRYING TO
KILL ME! I MUST
GET OUT OF HERE!

PREPARE THE MEN! WE...
YES! WE'RE LEAVING THE PLACE!
...HE MUSTN'T FIND ME!

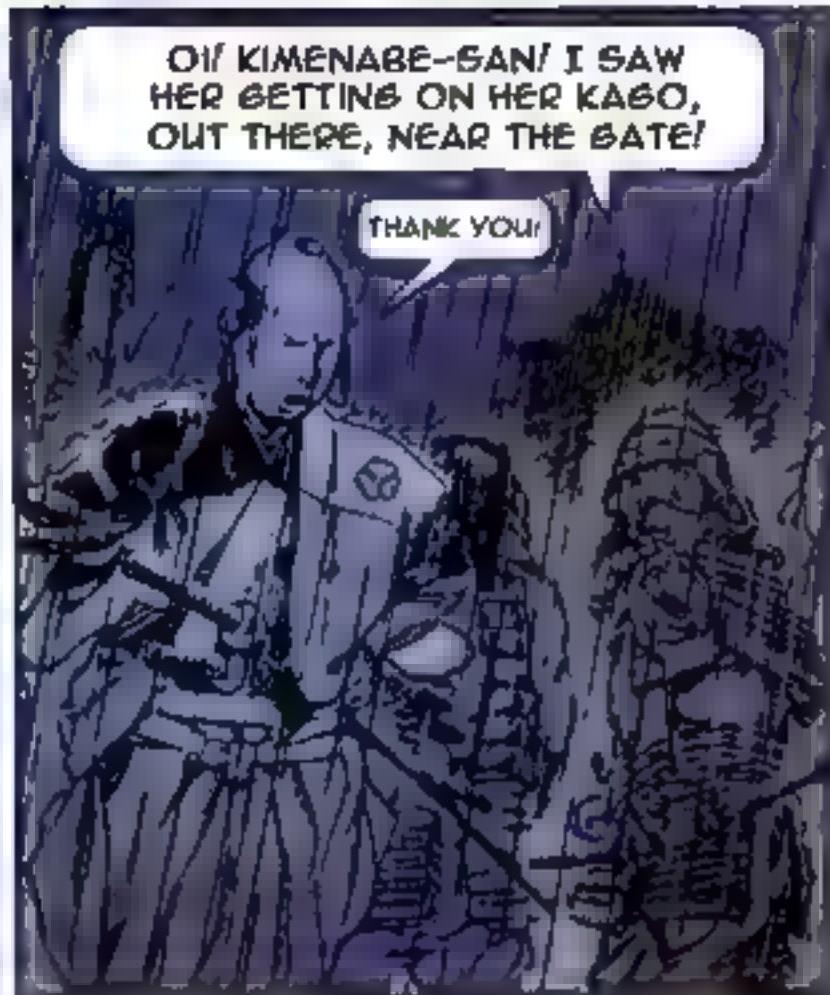
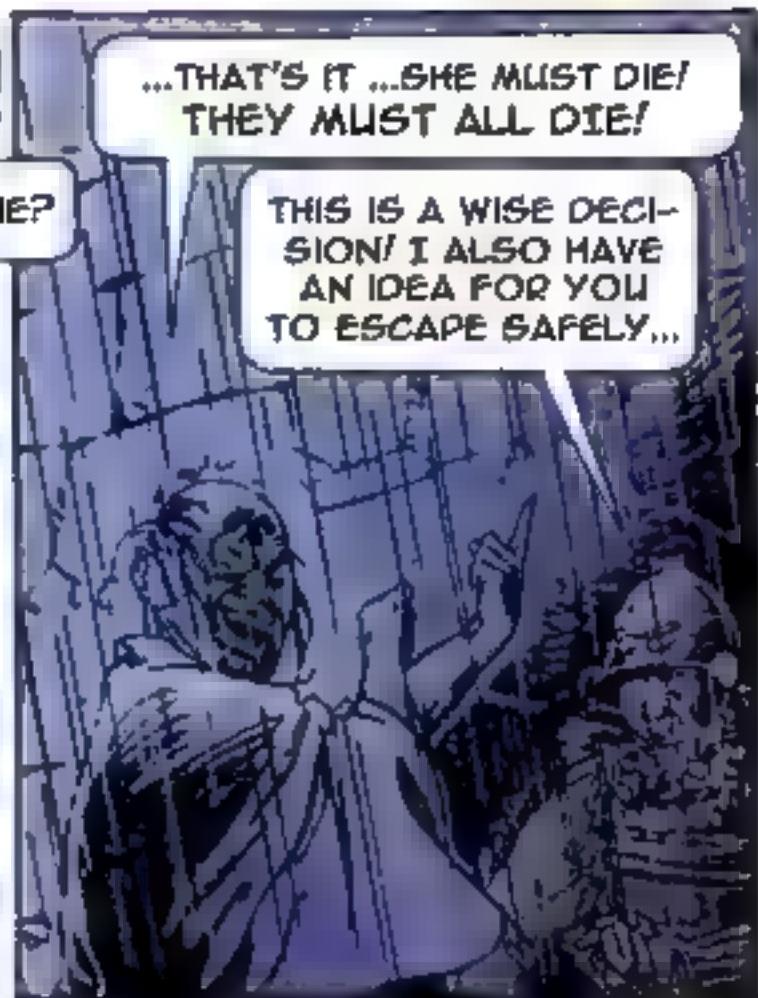
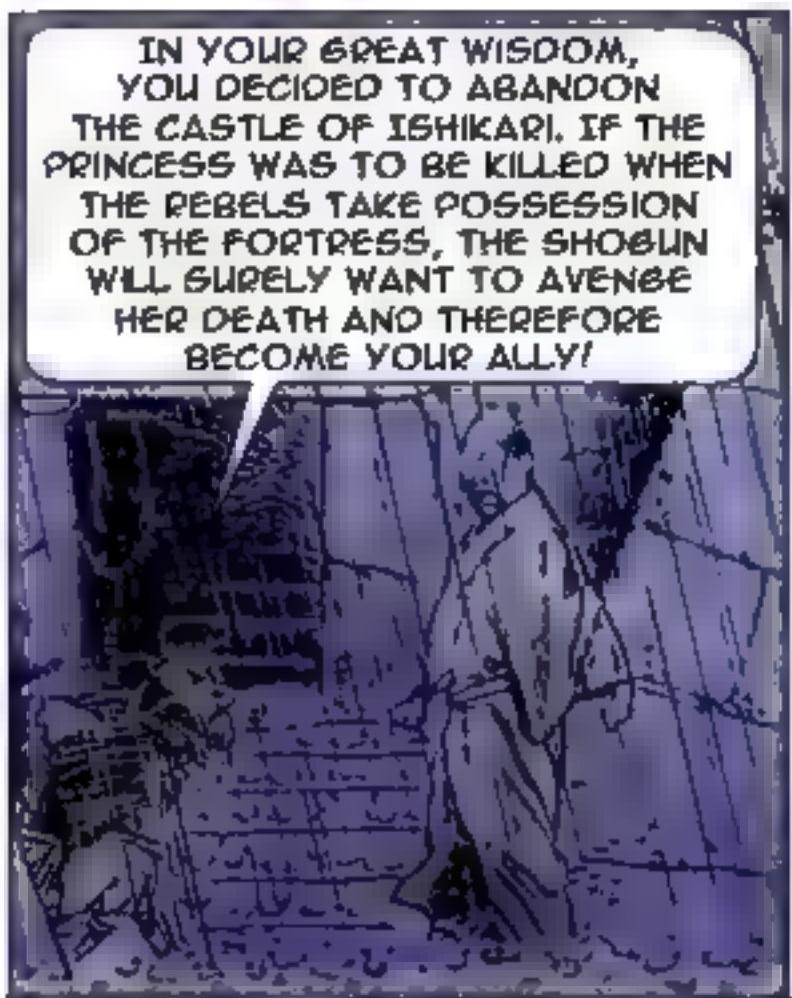
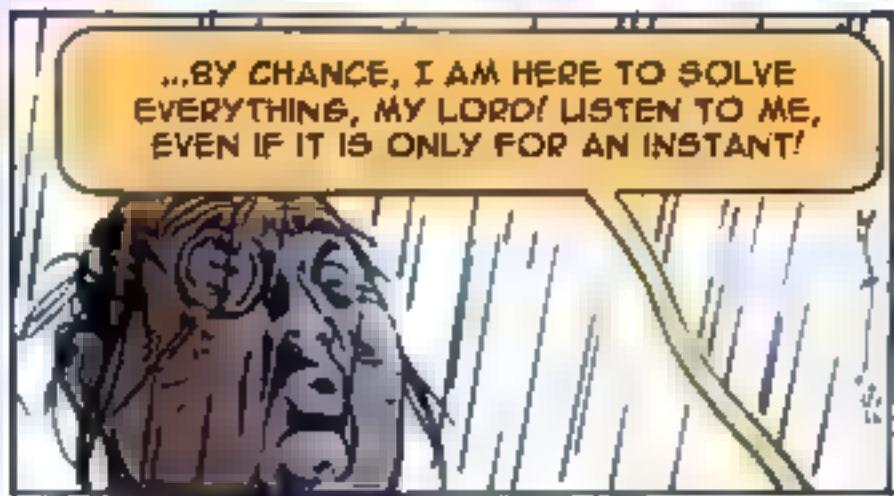
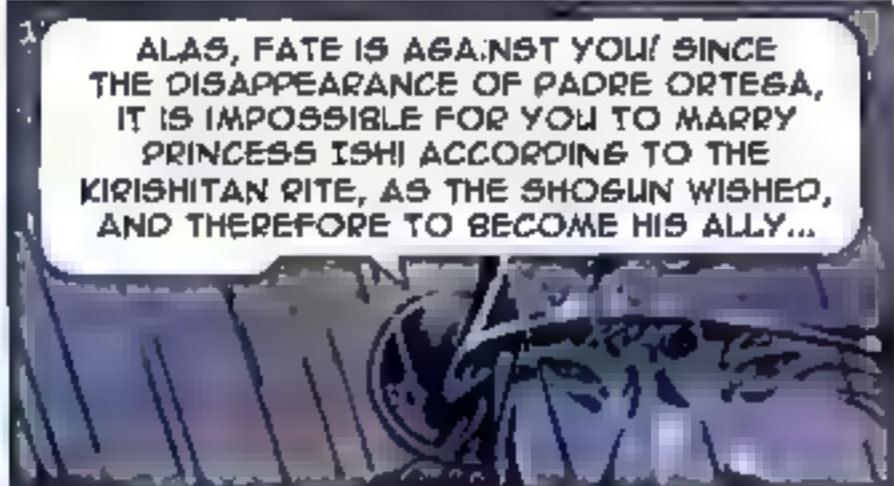
BUT... THIS IS
RIDICULOUS! NOW
THAT WE HAVE WATER,
WE CAN...

OBEY! I... I AM
YOUR MASTER!
WE'RE LEAVING
IMMEDIATELY!

HURRY UP! I'M GOING
TO HIDE... I'LL WAIT FOR
THE RIGHT MOMENT!
HE MUSTN'T FIND ME!

I HOPE YOU'RE NOT
GOING TO OBEY?!
HE'S GONE MAD! YOU
CAN'T RISK THE LIFE
OF THE PRINCESS IN
SUCH A WAY!

WHAT ELSE? HE IS MY LORD...
I HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE!
FORGIVE ME...



THERE! THEY'RE LEAVING!
FOOLS! WITH THE RAIN, BANDO
WAS LOSING THE SIEGE!

HE! HE! HE!

AKUSHI! IT'S TIME FOR US TO
GO TO THE NORTH WALL TOWER,
AND RING THE ALERT BELL!

LET'S TAKE THE PASSAGE UNTIL
WE REACH THE INSIDE OF THE
DUNGEON, THEN WE'LL ONLY
HAVE TO ACT AS IF WE'RE
MEMBERS OF THEIR ARMY!

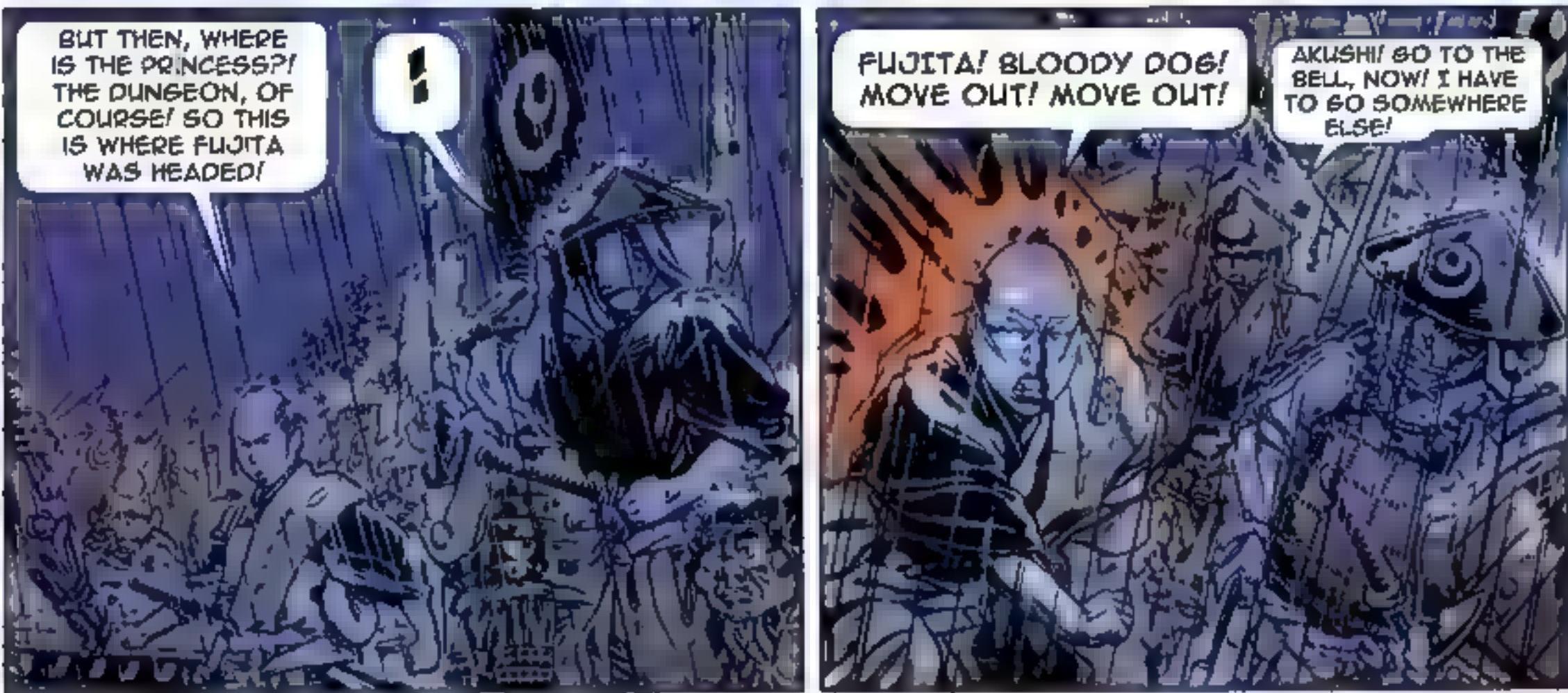
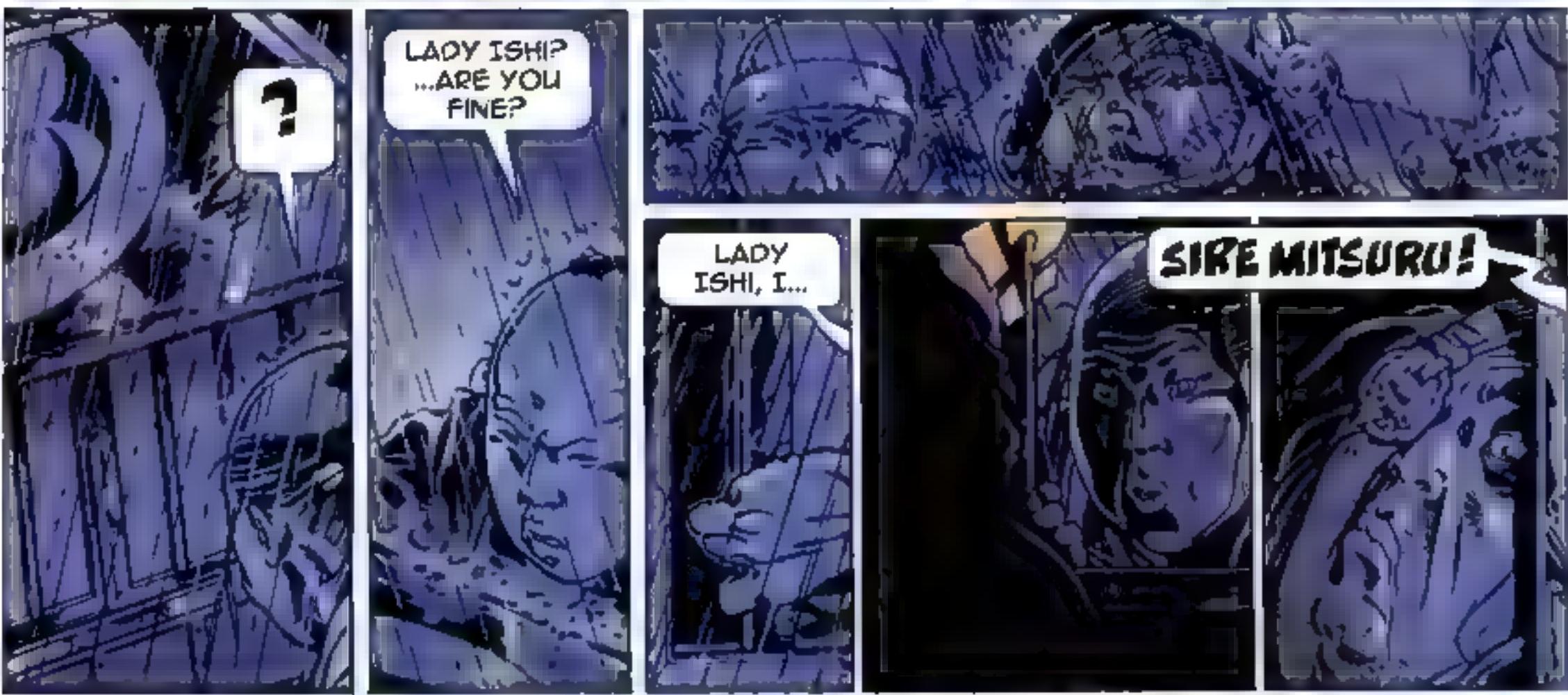
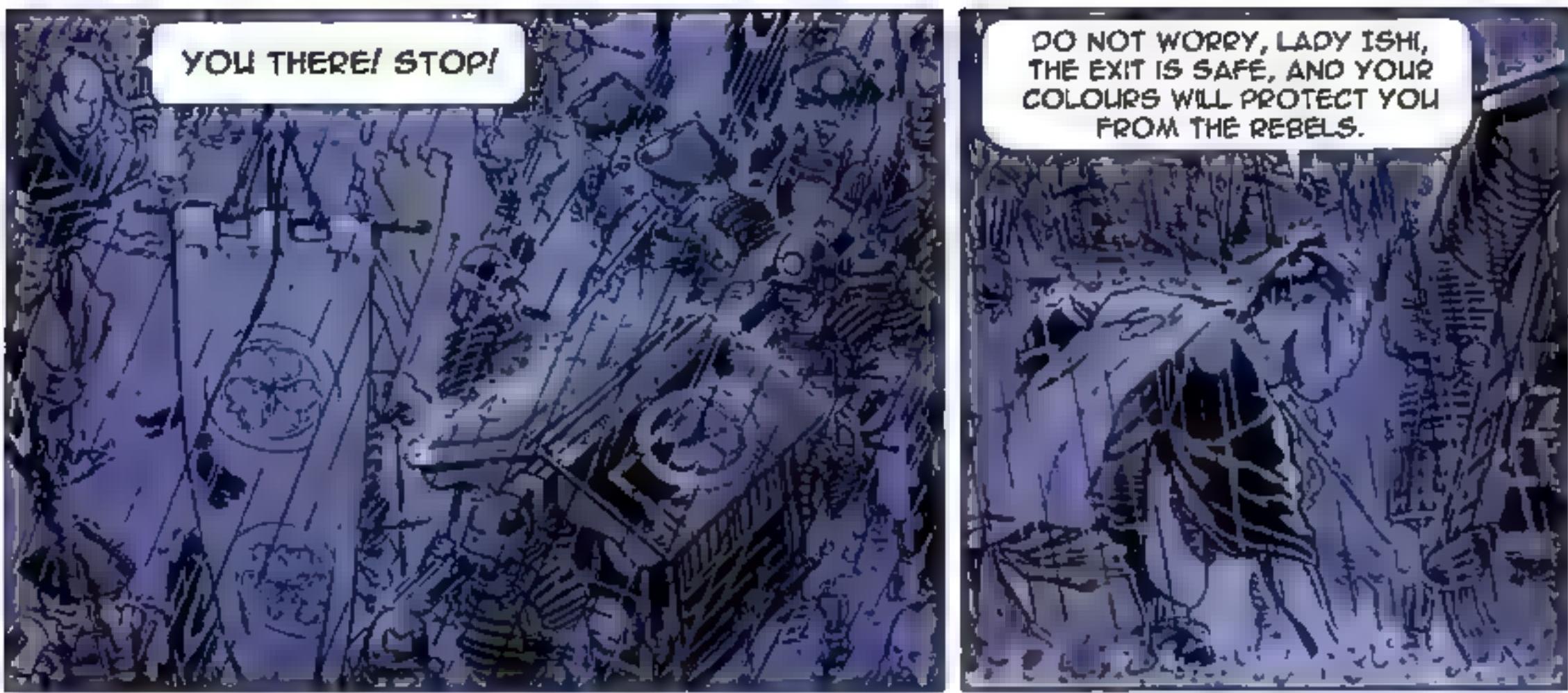
GOODNESS!
I HOPE I WILL
REACH LADY
ISHI BEFORE
SHE IS EXP-
OSED TO THE
ENEMY'S FIRE!

WE SEEM TO BE LUCKY!
WE'RE BREAKING THROUGH
THEIR FIRST DEFENCE LINES!

MAYBE WE
CAUGHT SIRE BANDO
OFF GUARD!

MY LORD! THE
ENEMY IS RUSHING
THROUGH OUR
LINES AS PLANNED!

HA! HA! HA! THE RAIN DIDN'T
CHANGE THE SITUATION! NOW THE
SIGNAL IS ABOUT TO BE GIVEN
AND THEN.. HA! HA! HA!







IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO DIE, PRINCESS!
THE FATE OF THIS PROVINCE MUST
FOLLOW ITS PATH! BUT YOU CAN LEAVE
IN PEACE, YOUR SERVANTS WILL NOT
HAVE TO MOURN YOUR DEATH!



YOU ARE A VILE SLUG,
FUJITA-SAN! A FOUL WORM!

HA! HA! HA!
Ha!



A WORM WITH A
SINGULAR SHARP SUR-
VIVAL INSTINCT, PRIN-
CESS, NOTHING MORE...

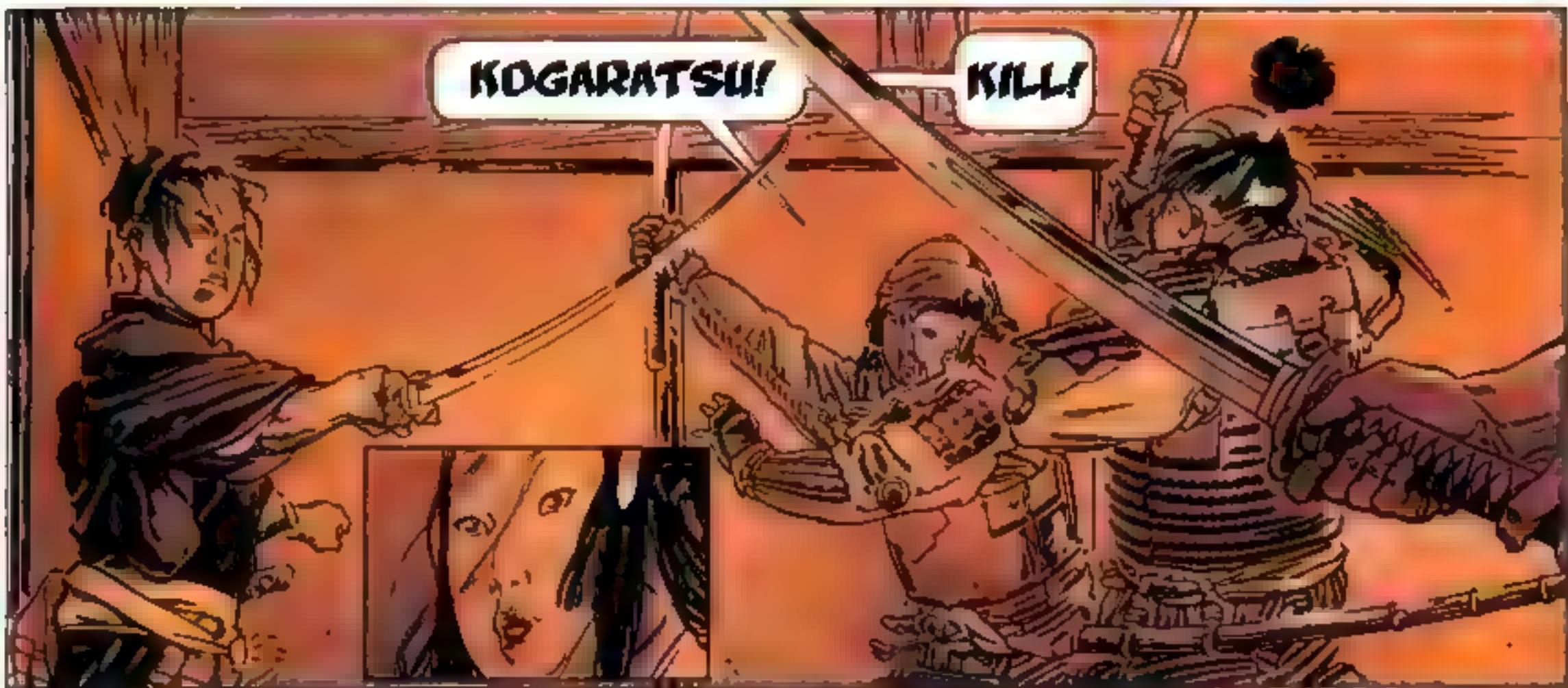


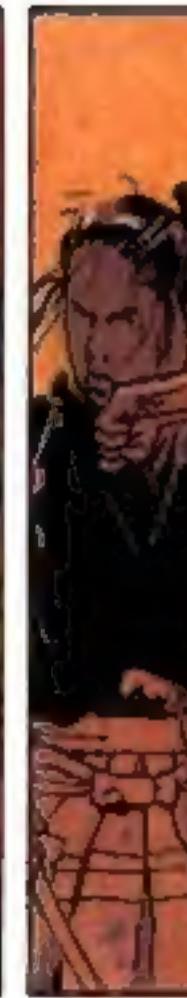
WORMS ARE SAID
TO CONTINUE TO
LIVE AFTER THEY'VE
BEEN CUT IN PIECES!
I REALLY FEEL
LIKE SEEING
FOR MYSELF,
FUJITA-SAN!

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KOGARATSU!

KILL!







KIMENABE-SAN!
SPARE THIS MAN!

I KNOW, PRINCESS. HAVING SEEN
WHAT YOUR FRIEND IS CAPABLE OF... I
CHOSE TO ANNOUNCE MY PRESENCE!

LISTEN TO THESE SHOUTS, THE BATTLE IS
ENDING. THE REMAINING FORCES OF MITSURU
ARE BEING WIPE OUT. SIRE BANDO HAS WON!



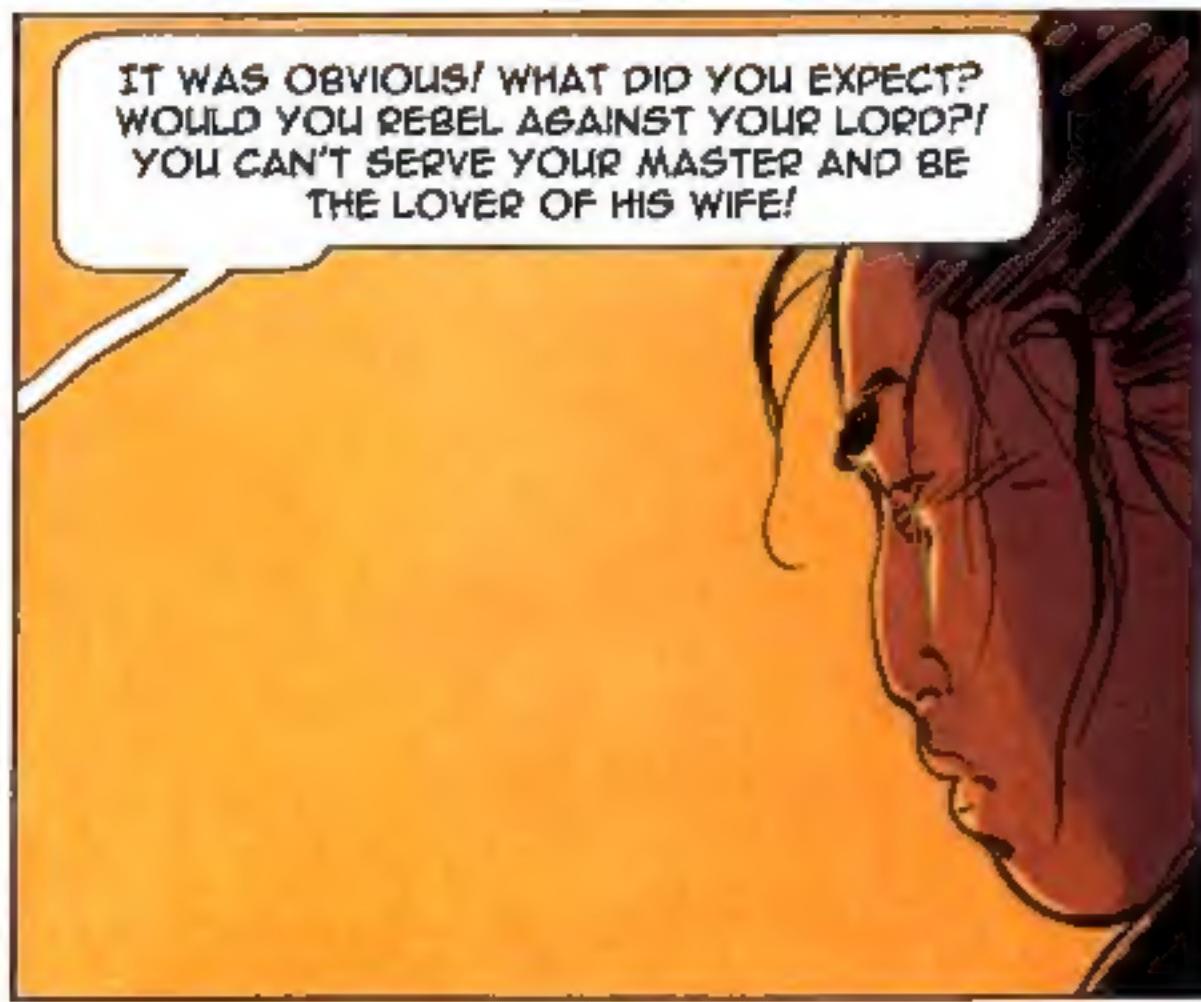
...HE WILL BE
THE NEXT LORD
OF THE HOSO-*i*!

THIS IS THE PERSON,
WHO YOUR UNCLE, THE
SHOGUN, WILL CHOOSE
FOR YOU TO MARRY!

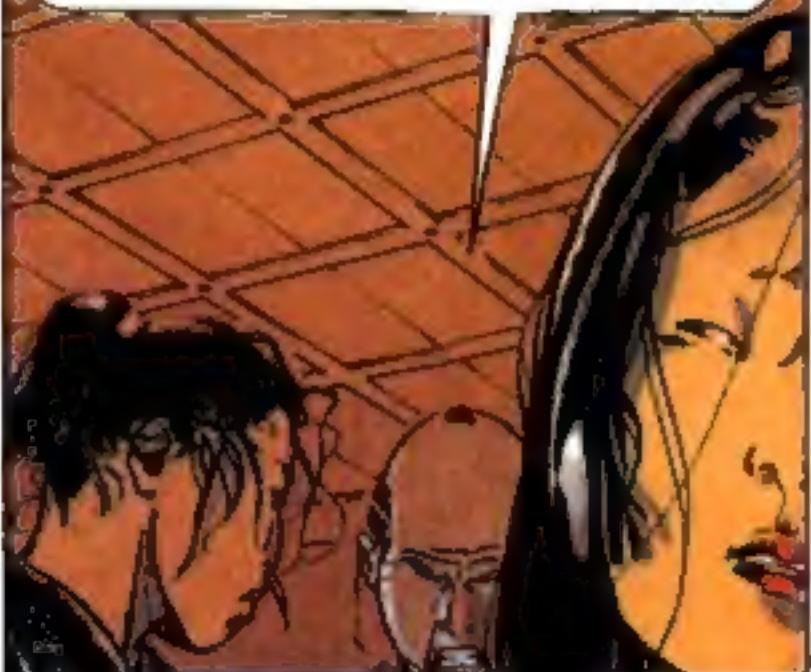
!! BUT...
THIS CAN'T
BE! WE
MUST
PREVENT
...



IT WAS OBVIOUS! WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?
WOULD YOU REBEL AGAINST YOUR LORD?/
YOU CAN'T SERVE YOUR MASTER AND BE
THE LOVER OF HIS WIFE!



GIVE UP! YOU KNOW IT IS IMPO-
SSIBLE! SWEET DREAMS HAVE NO
PLACE IN THIS WORLD! THE TWO
OF YOU WOULD BE CRUSHED!
...IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?!





MY LADY... I
MUST REPORT TO
MY LORD... AND...

IT SEEMS
THE RAIN HAS
STOPPED...
TODAY WILL BE
BEAUTIFUL...



DO NOT CRY, PRINCESS.
DO NOT WELCOME YOUR
FUTURE HUSBAND WITH A FACE
COVERED WITH TEARS!



EVERY MAN IS LIKE THE TIGER. HE HAS A BACK, A FLAW... IF THE TIGER, HIT ON THE BACK,
DOES NOT WANT TO DIE, HE MUST ACCEPT SHAME AND FLEE. AND EVEN IF HE SURVIVES,
NO ONE CAN FORESEE HIS FUTURE...

THE END